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Special Edition Featuring

100 Years of Research in Youth Development



Editor's Comments:

We are delighted to share this thought provoking issue of the *Journal of Youth Development* which highlights a century of youth development research and practice. A special thank you is extended to our guest editors, Michelle Alberti Gambone, Kathrin C. Walker and Joyce A. Walker, who provided insightful observation and direction throughout the project. In addition, we are most grateful for our guest authors who so willingly agreed to prepare the enclosed manuscripts as part of our examination of over a century of youth program development. As a result, we are presented with an inspiring call for further youth development research, one which I hope many of you will answer and then share in upcoming issues of the *Journal of Youth Development*.

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Contents

Feature Articles

Reflections on a Century of Youth Development Research and Practice

[Article 110603FA001].....Page 7

Walker, Joyce A.; Gambone, Michelle Alberti; Walker, Kathrin C.

This introduction to the special issue highlights the youth development research and practice base that influenced the field in the 20th century and presents some historical context for the practice and study of youth work. Next, it provides an overview of the articles which offer a retrospective account of youth development from how youth development has been studied, understood and measured to how youth development practice has evolved to support, engage and address the needs of young people. The introduction concludes with reflections stimulated by the process of reviewing the manuscripts and working with the authors on their contributions. Three themes emerged as good grist for the 21st century conversations moving forward: 1) the divergent perspectives on definition, dimensions of practice and accountability, 2) the value of translational scholarship bridging science and complex practice, and 3) the importance of leveraging systems support for field building.

Trends in Youth Development Topics: An Integrative Review of Positive Youth Development Research Published in Selected Journals Between 2001-2010

[Article 110603FA002].....Page 20

Barcelona, Robert J.; Quinn, William

The body of knowledge related to positive youth development has grown in the last two decades, yet there have been few, if any, systematic investigations of the research base in the field. Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to identify the trends in research topics and approaches within the field of positive youth development over the last 10 years by examining five top-tier research journals plus one research-to-practice journal. Results revealed that only 19% of the manuscripts published in all of the selected journals had a positive youth development focus, and this was reduced to 13% when just the five top-tier research journals were considered. Analyses of the positive youth development manuscripts pertaining to population characteristics, methodology, research setting, and topical areas provide a snapshot of the trends and gaps in the body of knowledge related to youth development, and have implications for future research efforts in the field.

Positive Youth Development: Processes, Programs, and Problematics

[Article 110603FA003].....Page 40

Lerner, Richard M.; Lerner, Jacqueline V.; Lewin-Bizan, Selva; Bowers, Edmond P.; Boyd, Michelle J.; Mueller, Megan Kiely; Schmid, Kristina L.; Napolitano, Christopher M.

Using the tripartite conception of positive youth development (PYD) suggested by Hamilton (1999) – as a developmental process, a philosophy or approach to youth programming, and as instances of youth programs and organizations focused on fostering the healthy or positive development of youth – we review different theoretical models of the developmental process

involved in PYD. In addition, we review the ideas for and the features of youth development programs aimed at promoting PYD. We discuss the need for research interrelating different, theoretically-predicated measures of PYD and, as well, the importance of clear links between models of the PYD developmental process and of the youth development programs seeking to enhance PYD among diverse youth. We discuss several conceptual and practical problematics that must be addressed in order to integrate the three facets of PYD scholarship.

Locating, Analyzing and Making Available a Century of 4-H Research Studies, 1911-2011 [Article 110603FA004].....Page 65

Scholl, Jan; Paster, Amy

For years, 4-H has emphasized the value of being a research-based youth organization in its long term association with the land-grant university system. But, it was the general consensus among state and national leaders that the program had no research base. The main objectives of this study were to: locate and document research studies conducted (between 1911-2010) in order to support or dispel notions about the lack of 4-H research and its focus on cows and cooking, to make information about the research studies available to the larger community of youth program practitioners and researchers and provide a general review of research topics by decade. Three thousand five hundred and fifty six studies were found over a thirteen year period and only one percent of these related to "cows or cooking." To make the data available to current and future youth professionals and researchers, the information about each study was transferred to an Internet web-site. Finally, a full century of research topics were summarized.

From Then to Now: Emerging Directions for Youth Program Evaluation [Article 110603FA005].....Page 82

Arnold, Mary E.; Cater, Melissa

Understanding the impact of youth development programs has been an important topic since the programs first began, and the past 25 years in particular have witnessed considerable advances in the evaluation of youth development programs. This article presents a brief history of youth development program evaluation, considering how it has changed over the years. From there, three contemporary trends related to youth program evaluation are examined: 1) a new evaluation focus, which is the emphasis on evaluating program quality; 2) organizational structures related to effective program evaluation, primarily in the area of program evaluability and evaluation capacity building; and 3) an emerging evaluation approach, involving youth in evaluating the programs that affect them. The article concludes with a call for programs to attend carefully to program implementation quality.

Diversity and Inclusion in Youth Development: What We Can Learn from Marginalized Young People [Article 110603FA006].....Page 95

Russell, Stephen T.; Van Campen, Kali

As we commemorate 100 years of youth development programs whose origins are traced to organizations founded in the United States, we consider key insights as well as strategies relevant for diversity and inclusion. Many of the large, mainstream youth development organizations and programs that were founded over a century ago now primarily serve youth in the "mainstream": youth from the middle classes, traditional families, and dominant cultural groups. A growing body of scholarship considers the positive development of youth who are marginalized due to their social class, ability, sexuality, citizenship status, race, ethnicity, or culture. We draw insights from studies of youth and families who are immigrants, or who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT). These findings provide a vantage point for

considering ways that contemporary youth development organizations might stretch the margins, or adapt their practices, in order to reach and include all youth.

The Many Faces, Features and Outcomes of Youth Engagement

[Article 110603FA007].....Page 109

Saito, Rebecca N.; Sullivan, Theresa K.

Civic engagement, experiential education, positive youth development, youth leadership, service-learning: what is it about these programmatic models that account for their popularity and impact over decades? What's at the core, how are they similar and different, and what differential impacts and benefits might various types or forms of youth engagement affect? The lack of consensus on conceptual frameworks and definitions of youth participation and engagement has been identified as one of the issues plaguing the field and restricting progress of youth engagement research and practice (O'Donoghue, Kirshner & McLaughlin, 2002). The authors present a conceptual framework called the Rings of Engagement that captures the myriad ways in which people think about youth engagement. The literature on the benefits and outcomes of each ring or type of youth engagement is highlighted. The authors conclude with recommendations for further research which will guide training, stakeholder-driven communication tools created to garner support, ways to act locally while working at the intermediary level to provide the supports necessary to promote and support youth engagement.

The Evolving Role of Youth Workers [Article 110603FA008].....Page 126

Borden, Lynne M.; Schlomer, Gabriel L.; Wiggs, Christine Bracamonte

In reviewing the field of youth development, of which youth workers are a part, it is clear it has had a long and complex history that is intertwined with other disciplines. More recently youth workers have experienced a transformation of sorts, with youth programs in the past being seen exclusively as a place to play and have fun, whereas today's expectations include a much broader focus on the overall positive development of young people. This evolution has been heavily influenced by a number of societal changes that have placed increasing demands on youth programs. Today's youth workers are faced with the responsibility to promote a young person's development which often includes supporting academic success and graduation from high school, reducing risk-taking behaviors, increasing positive health attitudes, and more. Youth workers have seen their role change dramatically over the past 20 years with greater demands and increased accountability.

Voluntary Youth-Serving Organizations: Responding to the Needs of Young People and Society in the Last Century [Article 110603FA009].....Page 139

LeMenestrel, Suzanne M.; Lauxman, Lisa A.

As many national youth-serving organizations have either celebrated their 100th anniversaries or are approaching their centennials, we take a step back to celebrate these organizations' accomplishments, but also to examine how youth organizations have responded positively to the youth development philosophy and approach to programming. The focus of this paper is on those organizations in which participation by youth is voluntary.

New Horizons: Understanding the Processes and Practices of Youth Development [Article 110603FA010].....Page 155

Larson, Reed W.; Kang, Hyeyoung; Perry, S. Cole; Walker, Kathrin C.

This article presents new horizons for research on youth development by focusing on the challenges youth face in learning teamwork and in coming to terms with diversity. These are both essential competencies for navigating the "real world" of the 21st century. We examine

how youth experience these challenges within programs; also how they present second-order challenges to practitioners. The underlying message of this article is that it is essential for researchers to see programs from the point of view of the people in them. Researchers have learned quite a bit of what can be learned from arm's length: that programs can make a difference in youths' lives and that certain features of settings are associated with these changes. To go further, researchers need to work side-by-side with practitioners and youth to understand their complex worlds as they experience them.

The Future of Youth Development: Multiple Wisdoms, Alternate Pathways and Aligned Accountability [Article 110603FA011].....Page 167
Blyth, Dale A.

Based on trends and events observed or experienced by the author over the last 30 years in research, evaluation and practice, this article examines three challenges facing and shaping the future of the youth programs as contexts for development. The first challenge surrounds how the field comes to understand, value and integrate different forms of knowing -- particularly quantitative data. The second challenge represents how the field shifts from proving it makes a difference to improving the ways it makes a difference by expanding the pathways to impact. The third challenge regards how the field responds to and shapes accountability pressures in ways that better align accountability rather than succumb to it. Implications of each challenge for effectively bridging research and practice are noted.

Call for Papers - Guidelines.....Page 183

Reflections on a Century of Youth Development Research and Practice

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Reflections on a Century of Youth Development Research and Practice

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Abstract: This introduction to the special issue highlights the youth development research and practice base that influenced the field in the 20th century and presents some historical context for the practice and study of youth work. Next, it provides an overview of the articles which offer a retrospective account of youth development from how youth development has been studied, understood and measured to how youth development practice has evolved to support, engage and address the needs of young people. The introduction concludes with reflections stimulated by the process of reviewing the manuscripts and working with the authors on their contributions. Three themes emerged as good grist for the 21st century conversations moving forward: 1) the divergent perspectives on definition, dimensions of practice and accountability, 2) the value of translational scholarship bridging science and complex practice, and 3) the importance of leveraging systems support for field building.

Editors' Introductory Notes

This special issue of the *Journal of Youth Development: Bridging Research and Practice* highlights the issues in youth development research and practice that have influenced our growing field in the 20th century. When this journal's editorial board decided to publish a special issue commemorating the 100th anniversary of many national youth-serving organizations founded between 1907 and 1914, we three guest editors saw a tremendous opportunity to reflect on research trends and contributions that have influenced the field over time and also to

consider issues of practice that continue to evolve and challenge the field. The editorial board generated an initial list of compelling topics to be considered and identified a number of contributing authors. As co-editors, we then invited additional authors to fill out the storyline of how youth development organizations and programs have been studied and delivered throughout the last century.

The frame for the special issue is bridging research and practice around youth development in organizational settings and with attention to the impact on the lives of young people. It is intended to speak broadly to the field and take a view larger than any single youth organization. The title, "Reflections on a Century of Youth Development Practice and Research," emphasizes a historical perspective as well as research findings and critical observations that have shaped youth development research and practice in youth-serving organizational settings – as well as exploration of the challenges that continue for researchers and practitioners.

In this introductory article, we begin with some historical context for the practice and study of youth work. This is followed by an overview of the ten thought-provoking articles and editors' observations and comments stimulated by the process of reviewing the manuscripts and working with the authors on their development. Inevitably, not all ideas and issues are covered; notably, policy implications of research and practice are largely absent. Yet collectively, these articles begin to provide a retrospective account of youth development over the years, covering such issues as how youth development has been studied, understood and measured to how youth development practice has evolved to support, engage and address the needs of young people.

The 20th Century Context for 100 Years of Youth Work

The journey from early youth work to modern-day youth development programs is the evolution of an idea over time. The early years of the 20th century were a time of great social, political and economic change for Americans. The historic works of Lawrence Cremin (1964, 1988) tell the story well. Cremin cites the rise of Progressive Education, the expansion of scientific methods, attention to social welfare and human rights, and the impact of urbanization, industrialization and immigration as key features shaping the lives of individuals and the missions of organizations in the early 1900s.

In 1900 most American women could not vote and they would wait another 20 years to do so. The U.S. Census Bureau lists the median age of the male population at 23 years and females at 22 years; more than half of the population of 76 million was under 23 years of age. There were no radios and no movies. There were an estimated 8,000 automobiles and 10 miles of paved roads. Social activism and reform focused on anti-child-labor laws, the expansion of public education, battles to extend the vote and eliminate corruption in politics and industry, as well as to emphasize scientific solutions to problems of the day. Progressive educators promoted child-centered learning and John Dewey's philosophy of experiential learning coincided with the rise of juvenile organizations. Religious communities, the temperance movement, settlement houses and various clubs for young men sponsored public events, study groups, athletic competitions and Sunday schools for young people in the 19th century. But the momentum for organizational support for youth activities really took off in the first 20 years of the 20th century.

Youth organizations founded, imported and promoted during this time reflect the priorities and concerns of the young nation. Jane Addams and an army of settlement house workers engaged poor urban and immigrant children in learning for life in America. Luther Halsey Gulick and his wife Charlotte founded Camp Fire Girls to promote physical fitness and skills befitting a wife and

mother. Elizabeth Cady Stanton fought for play grounds in urban settings while the YMCA promoted attention to the body, mind and spirit of young men. Ernest Thompson Seton's passion for woodcraft lore influenced the Boy Scouts of America as well as the dozens of clubs and organizations which took children to the woods to explore nature and learn life skills not taught in the schools. Generally these organizations had missions grounded in health and well-being, family roles, citizenship, cultural and national pride, handicrafts, and skills for everyday life and work.

From the beginning, these organizations were not themselves progressive in the sense of being advocates for educational reform, youth policy or youth advocacy more broadly. They sat largely outside the world of policy creation and active reform. They were adult-led organizations with agendas driven by adult concepts of what young people needed and should be doing. They valued the spirit and energy of young people which could be mobilized for the betterment of neighborhoods, communities and families. Most of the organizations coalesced around the explicit values of the sponsoring adult leadership such as the fraternal order of Masons (Order of DeMolay, 1919 and Order of Job's Daughters, 1920), the agricultural National Grange (National Grange Junior, 1888), and Hadassah (Young Judaea Hashachara, 1909).

Group work in these settings typically focused on personal development, leadership within the faith, cultural or fraternal community value framework, and pursuit of common interests. These organizations grew organically from the interests and events of the day. They came to be recognized by affiliation (faith, sports, outdoors, gender) not by academic discipline or field of study. They were associated with space, place and environment more than with a common theory, research base or academic specialty. Today the practice of youth work is a vibrant mix of programs ranging from athletics to leadership, from small group work to national conventions, from personal growth to community revitalization.

Through the 1950s many community-based youth organizations depended on adult volunteer leaders and met in the out-of-school time in groups organized in small units like clubs or troops. Fun, friendships and active learning flourished in these settings. Between 1960 and 1980, in response to a moral panic around young people and their perceived potential for troublesome, criminal, self-destructive and generally bad behavior, new youth programs were organized and the older organizations adopted programs around drug prevention, anti-drunk driving campaigns (reminiscent of the temperance movement), pregnancy prevention, and productive alternatives for troubled, vulnerable, at-risk youth. This period is noteworthy in its embrace of the medical model of problem diagnosis and "fixing kids." By the 1980s one begins to see the growing enthusiasm for programs that build or develop young people in positive, normative ways. Thus enters the concept of youth development, a descriptor widely recognized today but still lacking a firm definition agreed upon across the field.

The 20th Century Context for Applied Research on Adolescents

By the early 1900s the American people generally expressed confidence that science and technology had the capacity to solve problems facing the nation. The history of linking observation and experimentation is long, but in the early years of the 20th century the concept of linking scientific research to practice, education and training in order to impact real-world problems blossomed. For instance, the Extension land grant system of Agricultural Experiment Stations demonstrated the value of linking university-based laboratory research and field experiments to hands-on training for farmers. The scientist and the practitioner worked together to find solutions to problems, create new plant and animal varieties, and increase

production and productivity. Statistics were king and experimental methods reigned supreme in agriculture as in many other disciplines.

The integration of research and practice in areas such as education, youth work, recreation, playground work or other areas of child and youth provision was slower to develop and was less intentional than it was in medicine and other established academic disciplines. John Dewey instituted the idea of a laboratory school associated with the University of Chicago as a community-based classroom for scholars and teachers in training. Laboratory schools and child care centers were common campus institutions throughout most of the 20th century. Springfield College in Springfield, Massachusetts became the training center for YMCA leaders and field secretaries for many years, but was not closely linked to any research institution or tradition of active field research.

For much of the century, those doing group work with or on behalf of children and young people relied on research theories and findings in education and human development focused on individual development. The adolescent was studied, not the context for working with adolescents in arenas beyond the classroom. Standardized tests were popular and highly valued as measures of normalcy or deviance. Likewise, the outcomes of prevention and intervention efforts were measured in terms of individual change with minimal attention to the nature and role of the contexts, relationships, and engagement strategies associated with that change.

The focus on the individual began to change in the 1970s. The article by Lerner and colleagues in this issue provides a valuable review of the scholars who studied adolescents from a developmental perspective and contributed to the research base the youth development field draws upon today. Theories such as attachment, resiliency and protective factors acknowledged Urie Bronfenbrenner's articulation of an ecological model of human development (1976). Explorations of the ecology of young people's development had a great influence on professionals working with children, youth and families in the last quarter of the century. Bronfenbrenner advocated studying young people in their context, paying attention to the role people and interactions played in the research. He promoted research of discovery and understanding in addition to experimental studies and hypothesis testing. His work was conceptually instrumental in bringing researcher and practitioner closer in the process of study.

In the 1970s the articulation of positive youth development concepts was gaining use in policy contexts as well as in applied research focused on social group work. One such attempt was a 1973 report commissioned by the Federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare which framed a concept of positive development grounded in fundamental human rights with application across physical, social, emotional, cognitive and moral domains (Konopka, 1973). It was intended to be a guide for a national youth policy, but the policy part never happened. However the document became a practical example of how the basic developmental needs of adolescents could be incorporated into the intentional design of youth programs almost regardless of organizational sponsorship or individual missions. A national training program for youth organization executives and staff followed with support from the Lily Endowment. While it died when the funding stopped, it too serves as a historical moment that transcended organizational boundaries and tried to unpeel the onion-like layers of complexity that still define the practice of youth work today.

Defining the field of youth development remains a challenge. In the late 1990s Stephen Hamilton made an observation that continues to ring true today (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2004). The term "youth development" is used in at least three different ways, referring to a natural

process of development, principles, and practices. All three are important, and they are logically related. Each of the articles in this special issue works from this definition—or insight—in one way or another. Whether “youth development” is a process, a set of principles, or a practice depends on who is looking at it.

Hamilton made another important point: The practice of youth work preceded research on the practice. “The youth development movement began with professionals and volunteers engaged day-to-day with young people in their communities, in Boys and Girls Clubs, parks and recreation programs, faith groups, families, essentially in settings or contexts other than schools . . . Youth development is not unique in arising from practice” (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2004, p. ix). By linking current practice to the history of youth work practice in the United States, we see the evolution of an idea more clearly and come to understand that the practice of youth development did not begin in the 1990s as much of the literature would suggest. Given the way that the terminology is both new and philosophically entwined with the traditions and history of hundreds of youth organizations, we can understand the confusion that arises when we start talking youth work practice and youth development research – just as we encounter questions when we begin to parse process, principles and practice. Readers of the articles presented here will recognize some of the ambiguity and fuzzy borders characteristic of the field.

Special Issue Overview

In “Trends in Research Topics in the Youth Development Research Field,” Robert Barcelona and William Quinn (2011) present an analysis of the content of published articles on youth development research in five top-tier journals with the terms “adolescence” or “youth” in the title. Their analysis shows that only 13% of the articles in these journals take a positive youth development approach, which raises important questions about the attention Tier I research journals devote to problems and deficit behavior. They observe that research on youth is not the same as youth development research, a term that in itself is challenging to define. Their review of the last decade raises issues around the need for publishing alternatives for research on applied youth development and analysis of practice.

In their article, “Positive Youth Development: Models, Meanings and Measures,” Richard Lerner, Jacqueline Lerner, Selva Lewin-Bizan, Edmond Bowers, Michelle Boyd, Megan Kiely Mueller, Kristina Schmid and Christopher Napolitano (2011) use Hamilton’s process-principles-practice definition of youth development to structure an invaluable summary and discussion of the most influential scholarship undergirding each dimension of youth development. Their article reviews different theoretical models of the developmental process, major conceptual frameworks for infusing positive youth development into practice, and examples of organizations and programs guided by a positive youth development approach. The authors argue the need to systematically integrate the three dimensions of youth development scholarship and practice in order to better understand the dynamic among them and move the field forward.

Jan Scholl and Amy Paster’s (2011) contribution to this volume, “Locating, Analyzing and Making Available a Century of 4-H Research Studies,” describes a unique database they compiled that includes over 3,400 studies of the 4-H Youth Development Program conducted between 1911 and 2010. Their effort was part of the inspiration for this special issue’s examination of the past 100 years. This research began with a goal of establishing the long existence of a 4-H research base. Comments on topics through the decades give a glimpse of organizational priorities over time. Although the studies in the database have not been fully analyzed, they are available for today’s scholars to explore in their own work.

In their piece, "From Then to Now: Emerging Directions for Youth Program Evaluation," Mary Arnold and Melissa Cater (2011) look back on the emergence of youth development program evaluation before considering three contemporary trends. They highlight a new focus on evaluating program quality, the current organizational consideration of capacity building, and the emerging evaluation approach of youth participatory evaluation. These trends raise questions about the traditional "gold standard" of impact studies in light of scarce resources for evaluation and different accountability demands.

Stephen Russell and Kali Van Campen (2011) contribute to the conversation in "Diversity and Inclusion in Youth Development: What We Can Learn from Marginalized Young People," which provides a critique of the ways that the large national youth organizations founded at the beginning of the 20th century have engaged—or not—with new immigrant and GLBT youth, two groups that are marginalized by organizations. The reader is challenged to recognize the basic family constructs and cultural traditions that must be recognized and addressed if marginalized young people are to be welcome and included.

In "The Many Faces, Features and Outcomes of Youth Engagement," Rebecca Saito and Theresa Sullivan (2011) report on research conducted to identify the core elements that are common to youth program models featuring youth engagement at various levels and in different ways. Created by practitioners in response to a comprehensive literature review and the filter of their own experience, their Rings of Engagement offer a model that can be applied to youth-adult partnerships, service learning, youth leadership and other youth engagement program designs and strategies.

The important role youth workers have historically played in youth work practice is explored in "The Evolving Role of Youth Workers," by Lynne Borden, Gabriel Schlomer and Christine Bracamonte Wiggs (2011). Their discussion of what might be gained and lost in the push to certify or professionalize the youth development field raises the questions of whether youth development is a field of practice, a profession, a discipline, an approach or even an epistemological construct that applies to many allied practices and related fields such as social work, formal education, recreation, residential care, afterschool and youth organizations.

In "Voluntary Youth-Serving Organizations: Responding to the Needs of Young People and Society in the Last Century" Suzanne Le Menestrel and Lisa Lauxman (2011) examine the early mission statements of 14 early national organizations providing programs and opportunities for young people, and then compare early iterations to present mission language. Their approach introduces major points in the evolution from older youth group work practices to things shaping youth development work today. Their organizational matrix emphasizes the variety, long life and responsiveness of these organizations.

Reed Larson and colleagues were asked to consider new directions for research. In "New Horizons: Understanding the Processes and Practices of Youth Development," Larson, Kang, Perry and Walker (2011) startle us to attention when they claim, "We know a lot about youth development, and we know very little." In a plea to recognize the complexities of practice in order to strengthen research, the authors use practical examples and suggestions to illustrate the issues they raise for the field.

Finally, Dale Blyth was invited to discuss issues that have the potential to impact the direction of the youth development field in the 21st century. In "The Future of Youth Development:

Multiple Wisdoms, Alternate Pathways and Aligned Accountability” he highlights some of the landmark events, publications and people who have shaped the out-of-school time world of youth development programs in the 20th century (Blyth, 2011). He makes the case that it will take a more varied approach to research on processes, principles and programs as well as more serious collection of quantitative data in order to build a strong youth development field. Lastly, he offers a metaphor for conceptualizing program impact and a view of aligning accountability for funders and policy makers.

Together these articles represent an evolving understanding of youth development program practice and research. They shed light on how far the field has evolved, just as they stimulate critical reflection on the issues and challenges that we carry forward.

Editors’ Reflections

Youth development is a very broad, interdisciplinary field. No single journal issue could deal comprehensively with a century of research and practice. But the articles in this issue do represent a variety of influential perspectives guiding scholarship, evaluation, practice, organizations, and policy in the field today.

The thoughtful articles in this volume give much reason to be optimistic about youth development as a vibrant practice and as a focus for substantive research. Reading the submissions and working with the authors to craft a cohesive volume was an exciting assignment. It presented an opportunity to look at ideas through new eyes and to reflect on many of the trends and issues of our field as raised by these authors. As we reflected across the articles, three important themes emerged for us that seem to be good grist for the 21st century conversations moving forward:

- the divergent perspectives on definition, dimensions of practice and accountability,
- the value of translational scholarship bridging science and complex practice, and
- the importance of leveraging systems support for field building.

Divergent Perspectives on Definition, Dimensions of Practice and Accountability

There are a number of issues in the field about which wise and well-intended people simply do not agree. They include tensions around definition, dimensions of practice and accountability. These issues have implications for the practice, applied research and policy dimensions of this work moving forward, and these tensions present both opportunities and challenges in different ways for different subsets of players. They are grounded in historic traditions, academic disciplines, institutional alliances and organizational imperatives. The key question is whether to push quickly for resolutions or move more slowly to establish greater common ground for the field.

First, there is no consistent usage or agreed upon definition of youth development. This presents problems in general when speaking to those outside the youth development field and particularly when representing U.S. practice and research to international colleagues. Hamilton named this issue in the late 1990s, yet we still lack consensus. In this volume, Barcelona and Quinn (2011) anchor their understanding of youth development in the world of practice. They describe youth development as an approach to working with young people that is grounded in the social and group nature of programs. They raise the question about the vague nature of the term “youth development research,” and question how this is the same or different from research on adolescents. In their article, Lerner and colleagues (2011) have adopted the term

“positive youth development” or PYD which seems to focus on young people while striving to incorporate the principles and context shaping practice. Depending on the audience and purpose, the field may be referred to as youth development, after-school, out-of-school time, informal education, complementary learning, expanded learning opportunities or nonformal learning (to name but a few). These are not irrelevant distinctions; they mean slightly different yet significant things to different people. The question becomes, does the field draw strength from this breadth of understanding or is it weakened by the absence of a single understanding of the kinds of setting and programs that comprise the youth development field?

A second related issue is lack of agreement on important dimensions of youth development practice, in terms of both which practitioners are included as well as how to advance the profession. Borden et al. (2011) provide one broad, all-encompassing definition while others prefer distinct descriptions that have meaning to a particular sector and represent the nuanced nature of specific types of work. Related is the debate about professionalization and credentials for adults working with and on behalf of young people. While youth workers generally seek the respect and higher levels of compensation associated with professionalization, some raise concerns about reducing practice to concrete, universal, procedural knowledge for fear of stripping youth work of its essence or about professionalization serving a gatekeeping function. Is the greater wisdom in establishing a single collective identity and profession or does the strength of the field reside in the variety and independence of the different sectors?

A third area of tension involves accountability associated with research and program evaluation. There is a continual call from funders and policy makers for evidence that youth programs make a positive difference in the lives of young people, and for clarity about how impacts are achieved. Practitioners and researchers alike regularly adjust their programmatic and research agendas to fit ever-changing funding demands and priorities. We move across focusing on academic success, personal and social skills, program quality or positive impacts on society. While it is widely recognized that the field gains strength from a solid, scientific, experimental research base, many argue that youth development in program settings can best be understood naturalistically, ecologically, synergistically and culturally (see Larson et al., 2011). As Arnold and Cater (2011) note, a limiting factor is that strong research and evaluations take time, money and knowledge resources, things that most youth serving organizations do not have.

These competing positions and needs can be read as signs of discord, or as signs of the vital unfolding of the field. They are anchored in the ambiguity and the complexity of youth development research and practice. It is possible that these varied understandings and perspectives are a natural consequence of a practice-based history, interdisciplinary grounding and dedication to work with young people, a demographic about whom society still has very mixed impressions and opinions. The character of youth work and whether it is primarily about intervention, prevention or promotion is fundamentally related to whether young people are individuals with human rights or a category of people who must continually prove their value and try to influence what adults believe about them.

Responding to impatience from funders, policy makers and the field itself, there is a tendency to “just do something” to address legitimate concerns about the boundaries, qualifications and accountability of youth programs, often without acknowledging the complexities involved in all these dimensions. In such a climate, it is tempting to impose the kinds of rules, structures and procedures that have been accepted by some other fields albeit not always in the best interest of young people. But in the big picture (think medicine, law, education) we are a young field. In this 21st century, we should take the time to define the field more clearly and to decide where

to be open and flexible, and where to be more prescriptive. This should be guided by the lessons of history, the converging findings of research, the missions and purposes of organizations, the philosophy and beliefs of youth workers, the requirements and accountabilities of funders, the needs of young people, and the priorities of families and communities.

The Value of Translational Scholarship Bridging Science and Complex Practice

The arena of translational scholarship is one with great promise to strengthen and focus the youth development field on the issues of importance. There are professions where the bridge between science and complex practice is soundly constructed. The field of professional medicine deals with the full complexity of the human system—the body—and it has an effective mechanism for bridging scientific knowledge directly into practice. That mechanism is the doctor. This highly trained, highly skilled, highly paid practitioner is taught the disciplinary foundations (e.g., biology, chemistry, physiology, pharmacology) that contribute to understanding how to promote health and treat disease. The education and apprenticeship process is a lengthy one. Doctors are taught how to assess new findings from research in these contributing disciplines and translate them into evidence-based practice. Because the human system is so complex, the field of medicine split into distinct specialties around each of the body's systems. We have no comparable bridging in our field to deal with the full complexity of the system of psycho-social development and to promote social/psychological health and development.

We are not advocating that youth work follow in the footsteps of medicine. We do, however, need to fill these functions of distilling, translating and disseminating good science on human development into the daily practice of promoting youth development. There is increasing recognition that young people are complex, developing organisms that need to be understood holistically in order to promote the achievement of positive life outcomes. In the last 10 years scholars such as Richard Lerner, Peter Scales, James Connell and Michelle Gambone, as well as the National Research Council, have begun to translate the science of developmental research into the practice of youth development. But there have been no significant commitments of funds or avenues to systematically take the frameworks and implement and study them as a piece.

In order to move forward in any meaningful way with achieving population-wide healthy outcomes for youth, we need systematic approaches to work on these bridging functions:

- distill research findings and translate them for practical application,
- create and make available tools for teaching and training,
- study and test the new strategies in practice settings, and
- make findings and recommendations for practice widely available.

At present, important new research relevant to work with young people is largely inaccessible to the working professionals who need it the most. There is a pressing need for a coordinated, ongoing effort to sort and disseminate findings from developmental science so that what is learned can be put into practice. A systematic effort or process is required to distill the most important findings from academic/scientific research from multiple disciplines (e.g. psychology, sociology, education) on an ongoing basis, translate them into what people working with youth should *do* and disseminate this knowledge.

For example, just in this volume (Lerner et al. 2011; Russell & Van Camp, 2011) there is a wealth of important research referenced that can and should play a key role in what developmental supports are put in place for young people. This includes research on sense of purpose, assets, motivation, active engagement, systems theory of context influences, resilience, thriving, diversity and inclusion. Barcelona and Quinn (2011) point out that professional journals often ignore practice and fail to provide sorting mechanisms to identify the processes and experiences that are the most important in the day-to-day practice with youth.

The creation of training and curricula follows the identification of important social psychological mechanisms, setting features and such. Currently each organization is left on its own to either develop or purchase curricula that fit their mission, if any are available. For example, we know the critical importance of including youth in meaningful decision making across all settings, but any youth worker will tell you that they need tools and training on how to do this effectively. Even with a large scale effort like the National Research Council research summary (2002) there was no follow up with creating training and tools based on the findings.

Once the tools for application are created and made available, practitioners and researchers together need the opportunity to practice, refine and study their effectiveness in learning laboratory like settings. Reciprocal respect and collegial inquiry are required to make this successful. In medical science there is a clear recognition of the need to study processes first in a controlled setting using rigorous methodology where important factors can be controlled and varied. In the science of human development we try to implement the same rigorous scientific methodology in uncontrolled environments with too many variables. We are bombarded with calls for “gold standard” experimental design research, but we are left with having to try to figure out how to graft this type of research onto naturally occurring programs that have their own history, systems, needs and agendas. We have not had a systematic process of ongoing refinement and restudy that allowed us to actually determine what *could* work. We need something more like the High Scope learning lab that yielded a wealth of practice standards, training and curricula that changed the face—and effectiveness—of early child care.

At the same time we cannot ignore the importance of having scientists move into the naturally occurring settings of youth programs and organizations. Understanding the complexity of the relationships among setting features, activities and the development of the human being requires deep research to begin to untangle associations and develop hypotheses for study in more controlled environments. Translational scholarship with researchers and practitioners mutually engaged around the common thread of youth development has the potential to align the field around a defined interdisciplinary core to the benefit of both.

The Importance of Leveraging Systems Support for Field Building

In framing this special issue, the editorial board expressed a preference to focus on research related to programs and organizations; consequently attention to youth policy and supportive systems (such as intermediaries, foundations, collaborations and networks) is largely absent. Still, our editorial conversations kept circling back to the idea that a broad research approach over time along with serious attention to translational scholarship has great potential to influence the contested issues, and to gradually bring greater consensus, definition and alignment to the youth development field.

Blyth (2011) makes a compelling argument that real impact happens and important discoveries are made within the program environment. Likewise Larson and colleagues (2011) argue that more program level observation will benefit scholars and practitioners. Neither suggests an

emphasis on programs alone. Yet the inclination of people inside and outside the field to see youth development practice simply as a collection of programs can mask the critical nature of systems support that is required if the field is to grow and thrive. Strong and influential systems play a critical role in influencing youth policy, creatively linking systems impact and public accountability, and supporting the bridging work that serves the field broadly. Examples include the Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development's report *A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours* (1992), the Forum for Youth Investment's policy and professional development contributions, and the W.T. Grant Foundation's continued commitment to research and scholarly excellence in the field.

Perhaps it is in attention to systems building, translational scholarship, and research and practice clearly labeled as *youth development* that the field of youth development will come to maturity. With strong system support for professional development, quality improvement, scholarly opportunities for practitioners in referred journals, and effective bridging of scientific research and practice, many of the conundrums of definitions, boundaries, professionalism and accountability will work themselves out in logical sequence. With systems to support full rights and participation of young people, organizations and programs will more easily accept the robust role young people can play in their personal growth and development.

As editors, we thank the editorial board of the *Journal of Youth Development ~ Bridging Research and Practice* for the opportunity to work with contributing colleagues to frame these ideas and critiques of issues in the field of youth development in the 20th century. The process certainly inspired us – and we hope these articles stimulate conversations and thinking for you as well.

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Trends in Youth Development Research Topics: An Integrative Review of Positive Youth Development Research Published in Selected Journals Between 2001-2010

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Trends in Youth Development Research Topics: An Integrative Review of Positive Youth Development Research Published in Selected Journals Between 2001-2010

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Abstract: The body of knowledge related to positive youth development has grown in the last two decades, yet there have been few, if any, systematic investigations of the research base in the field. Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to identify the trends in research topics and approaches within the field of positive youth development over the last 10 years by examining five top-tier research journals plus one research-to-practice journal. Results revealed that only 19% of the manuscripts published in all of the selected journals had a positive youth development focus, and this was reduced to 13% when just the five top-tier research journals were considered. Analyses of the positive youth development manuscripts pertaining to population characteristics, methodology, research setting, and topical areas provide a snapshot of the trends and gaps in the body of knowledge related to youth development, and have implications for future research efforts in the field.

Introduction

Over the past 20 years, the field of youth development has witnessed a shift in practice from single issue programs that address specific problem behaviors to more comprehensive strategies that provide broad supports for all youth focusing on their needs and competencies. Prior to the 1990s, the basic idea was that positive development was defined by the absence of problem behavior (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006; Lerner, 2005). In the last 20 years, there has been a movement away from viewing youth as “problems to be managed” to one that views them as assets capable of influencing their own development (Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998). However, there have been few or no published studies that provide a systematic investigation of the body of knowledge that encompasses the field of

positive youth development. This special issue of the *Journal of Youth Development* provides a golden opportunity to undertake this challenge.

One useful method for determining research trends within a particular discipline is to conduct an integrative review of the literature within the field. Integrative reviews are systematic analyses of the research literature, with the intention of more fully grasping the issues and topics addressed in the overall body of knowledge (Jackson, 1980). To date, there have been no known integrative reviews published that cover the broad discipline of positive youth development. While Bocarro, Greenwood, and Henderson (2008) conducted an integrative review of research related to youth development, they delimited their study to just those articles published in four recreation and leisure studies journals.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to examine the trends in research topics and approaches within the field of positive youth development, by focusing on four key areas: population characteristics, methodology, research setting, and topical areas covered. This exploration will allow scholars and practitioners to make generalizations about the youth development research, and assess the overall body of knowledge relative to what needs to be known about the field. Researchers can also identify gaps in topic areas and methods that can ultimately provide an agenda for future research directions.

Literature Review

Integrative reviews have been conducted on numerous topics related to youth in the past ten years. For example, such approaches have been used to understand the experiences of immigrant and ethnic minority children (Guiberson, 2009; Stodolska, 2008; Telzer, 2011), adolescent peer experiences (Kingery, Erdley, Marshall, Whitaker, & Reuter, 2010), emotional regulation (Chambers, Gullone, & Allen, 2009), sports coaching (McCullick et al., 2009), and family resiliency (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009). Integrative reviews have been undertaken to understand trends in topical content and methods, such as Graham and Ismail's (2011) study conducted in the field of community psychology. Of particular interest to this study is Bocarro, Greenwood, and Henderson's (2008) integrative review on youth development and recreation.

While the disciplines vary in the papers mentioned above, all attempt to provide some guidance to research investigators regarding the direction of the accumulation of knowledge. Because journal articles are indicators of the patterns of thinking that help to define specific fields, it makes sense that scholars and practitioners would be interested in the aggregated body of knowledge that helps to define a particular disciplinary domain (Graham & Ismail, 2011). As the field of youth development has matured, a case can be made that it is time to look more systematically at the research efforts in the field. By doing so, researchers and practitioners can utilize the knowledge base to inform key stakeholders in a manner that optimally contributes to youth well-being.

Background and Approach

One of the methodological challenges in identifying trends in youth development research is reasonably identifying what constitutes "youth development" research. There is a long and rich history of research in adolescent development that focuses on cognitive, physical, social, and emotional maturational processes (Lerner, 2005; Pittman & Wright, 1991). While this body of knowledge is a useful platform to frame an understanding of adolescent development, the term youth development is generally understood to be the application of this knowledge to intentional strategies for promoting positive youth well-being.

Youth development encompasses a specific set of principles and practices that help to mold and shape the developmental process. These principles generally include a focus on the assets and strengths of young people, as opposed to a focus on understanding problems or deficits (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Youth development principles also focus on supportive adult relationships, healthy and stimulating environments conducive to learning and skill attainment, formation and availability of challenging programs and activities, and recognition of the important role that youth themselves play in the process of their own well-being (Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004; Pittman & Wright, 1991). Youth development is put into practice within contexts and settings that are safe, appropriately structured, foster supportive relationships, provide opportunities to belong, model positive social norms, support efficacy and mattering, provide opportunities to build skills, and provide a dynamic flow among various ecological systems (i.e. family, school, community) (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). In sum, youth development is both theoretical and applied, particularly within community-based programs and organizations.

For the purposes of this review, it was important to be able to distinguish between “research on youth” and “youth development research.” Based on the general principles and practices of youth development explained above, we attempted to focus on studies that

- 1) were youth-focused;
- 2) selected variables that addressed relationships, supports, opportunities, programs, or services that were intentionally designed to influence positive well-being;
- 3) focused on strengths and assets as opposed to studies addressing specific problems or deficits; and
- 4) explored the profession of youth development, including studies on training, staffing, and leadership.

To establish the boundaries for this review and to capture the academic discipline of youth development, we did not include studies that were primarily focused on general adolescent development or maturational processes, or those studies that were focused primarily on particular problem behaviors (e.g. binge drinking, depression, eating disorders, suicide).

One of the other methodological challenges with a youth development research review is to define an age span that comprises the term “youth.” Most scholars have noted that the term “youth” encompasses approximately the second decade of life, corresponding to between 10 and 20 years of age (Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004; Lerner 2005). However, there is growing support for the notion that the definition of youth is extending in both directions. For example, Larson (2002) discusses the idea of a raised bar for adulthood in the twenty-first century, particularly as a result of increasing educational demands and employment constraints placed on adolescents. Others have noted the increasing occurrence of early pubertal development, particularly for girls (Steingraber, 2007), and the increasing cognitive capacities of young people as a result of their access to information (Costello, Toles, Spielberger, & Wynn, 2001). As such, it makes sense that youth development research could apply to those younger than ten and up to 25 years of age. To capture this, we included studies with children as young as 8, and included studies on young adults through age 25.

Finally, a decision had to be made regarding the publication years to include in the analysis. While youth development research has historical roots in developmental science that stretches back to the contributions of G. Stanley Hall (1904), much of what was published prior to the

early 1990s focused on the absence of deficits or problem behaviors (Lerner, 2005; Pittman, Irby, & Ferber, 2001; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Although researchers, practitioners, and policy makers were talking about positive youth development prior to the early 1990s, most point to Pittman and Wright's (1991) paper, *Bridging the Gap: A Rationale for the Role of Community Organizations in Promoting Youth Development* as being critical in shifting the focus from thinking of youth as "problems to be managed" (Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998) to one that views them as assets capable of influencing their own positive development (Costello et al., 2001). However, a decade after Pittman & Wright's (1991) seminal paper, some scholars contended that there was still a lack of research and theory in positive youth development (Larson, 2000), while others were still trying to define the characteristics of a positive youth development program (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

Thus it made sense, both from a practical and theoretical perspective, to examine the trends in positive youth development research over the past 10 years (from 2001 to 2010). Precedence has been set with various disciplines conducting decade reviews. For example, decade reviews have been conducted on the research literature in related disciplines such as family studies (Bogenschneider & Corebett, 2010; Kosutic & McDowell, 2008; D'Onofrio & Lahey, 2010), and healthcare (Chesla & Rungreangkulkij, 2001). In addition, the *Journal of Research on Adolescence* has recently published a special issue featuring a series of decade reviews covering a range of youth-related topics (Russell, Card, & Susman, 2011).

Methodology

While many scholarly journals publish research articles that pertain to children and adolescents, only a few focus solely on this population. For this study, we selected journals that had the words "youth" and/or "adolescent" in their title because such a strategy allowed us to capture a large body of research that would pertain to the field of youth development. To better understand the nature and extent of positive youth development research since 2001, we identified six journals that fit the criterion for review – *Journal of Research on Adolescence (JRA)*, *Journal of Adolescence (JA)*, *Journal of Adolescent Research (JAR)*, *Youth & Society (Y&S)*, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence (JYA)*, and *Journal of Youth Development (JYD)*. The first five journals were chosen because they are widely accepted as top-tier scholarly journals that focus on publishing work specifically related to youth and adolescence. The *Journal of Youth Development* was included because it has a primary role as an outlet for disseminating youth development research, and because it provides practitioner-focused research on youth development programs and contexts.

It is well understood that research about youth is published in a wide-variety of journals covering a range of professions that serve youth. For example, youth-oriented research is typically published in noted journals such as *Developmental Psychology*, *Journal of Community Psychology*, *Applied Developmental Science*, *Child Development*, and the *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*. Research on youth development has also appeared in journals specific to fields such as social work (e.g. *Social Work Review*), family studies (e.g. *Journal of Marriage and Family*), outdoor education (e.g. *Journal of Experiential Education*), health (e.g. *Journal of Adolescent Health*), and leisure studies (e.g. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*). While important contributions to youth development have been found in these journals, we delimited our analysis to only those journals that focus entirely on youth-related topics and that publish research from a broad array of professional settings and disciplinary topics (i.e. that are not focused on a particular aspect of youth development, such as health or recreation).

Procedures

Both of the authors and two trained graduate students in Clemson University's Youth Development Leadership Program each were assigned journals to scan for evidence that published articles met the criteria for inclusion in the study. Titles that clearly met the general principles and practices of youth development were retained. For example, words or terms such as well-being, adjustment, leadership, career planning, health, support, sports participation, and academic success led to inclusion. Titles that were clearly outside the scope of the project (i.e. those that were focused on general developmental processes or had a primary focus on deficits or problem behavior) were excluded.

The research team met to review the titles of all selected articles within the 2001-2010 time frame. The final list of manuscripts retained for analysis was determined following a discussion by the team and by consensus agreement. In a few cases no clear decision could be reached. This was usually because titles were ambiguous in that they included words that reflected positive youth well-being as well as terms that connoted adolescent developmental processes or problem-behaviors. In these cases, the research team collectively reviewed the abstract to determine whether to include the manuscript for analysis.

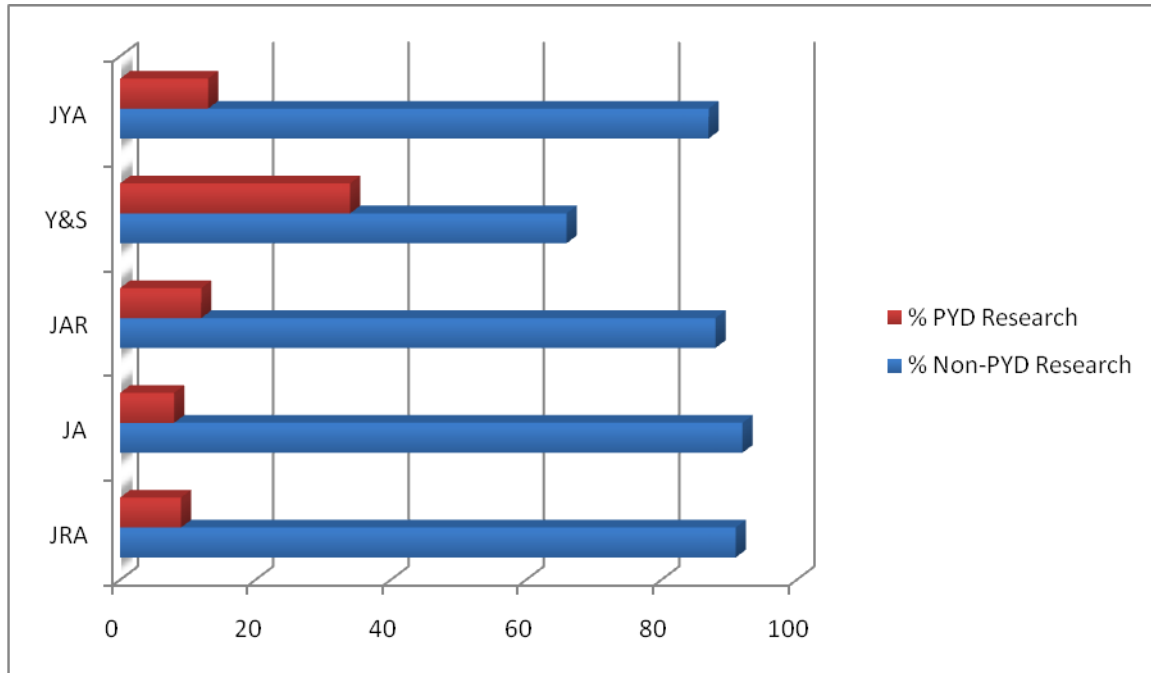
Following selection of the sample of articles to be included, the research team reviewed their assigned articles and categorized key pieces of information describing the study. Both deductive and inductive coding schemas were used in the process of categorizing articles (Graham & Ismail, 2011). For example, deductive coding was used to categorize publication type, methodologies employed, and population characteristics. Inductive coding was used to identify key topical areas and themes. For example, each member of the research team identified three to five key words that captured the general topical areas covered in their assigned articles. The team combined their list of key words, removed redundancies, and met to discuss common topical areas that emerged from their individual analyses. From this, a list of 23 topical areas was developed. These 23 topical areas were further refined and collapsed into 12 dominant themes found in the manuscripts that were reviewed. The research team then categorized their assigned manuscripts based on the topical area/s that best represented the research. A non-exclusive categorization system was used to capture the breadth and scope of the research focus, so manuscripts were often placed into more than one topical area (Bocarro, Greenwood, & Henderson, 2008; Graham & Ismail, 2011).

Data Analysis

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of manuscripts retained for analysis by journal title as a percentage of all of the manuscripts published in the selected journals between 2001-2010. The results of this effort yielded the following: *Journal of Research on Adolescence* (26 out of 284, 9%), *Journal of Adolescence* (50 out of 659, 8%), *Journal of Adolescent Research* (37 out of 317, 12%), *Youth & Society* (73 out of 216, 34%), *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* (99 out of 760, 13%), and *Journal of Youth Development* (all research manuscripts = 177). Thus, the percentage of research manuscripts categorized for this study as positive youth development research was 462/2413 (19%). Eliminating the *Journal of Youth Development* reduced this number further to 285/2236 (13%).

Figure 1

Percentage of Manuscripts Published in Research Journals from 2001-2010



Note: JRA = *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, JA = *Journal of Adolescence*, JAR = *Journal of Adolescent Research*, Y&S = *Youth & Society*, JYA = *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. The *Journal of Youth Development* was omitted here, as all 177 research articles were classified as having a PYD focus.

Population Characteristics

Table 1 includes the breakdowns of the population characteristics identified in this review. The majority of positive youth development articles published (65%) dealt with early adolescence (ages 13-15), and roughly half (52%) addressed late adolescence (ages 16-18). Approximately 1 in 5 articles (22%) focused on the key adolescence transition years (ages 10-12), and only 16% addressed the traditional college-age population. Only 5% of published articles addressed ages associated with the transition to adulthood (ages 22-25).

With respect to sex and gender, there were few published manuscripts identified that focused exclusively on either boys or girls, although 5% of manuscripts were girls-only studies. Interestingly, we identified only one study published in the last ten years that was focused exclusively on boys within a positive youth development context. The vast majority of the manuscripts published included both boys and girls in their sample (87%).

Approximately 8% of the studies did not include youth in their sample frame, but instead focused on key adult figures, such as parents, teachers, or youth serving professionals. Manuscripts that included the perspectives of adults, either as the sole population studied or in addition to youth, accounted for a relatively small number of the published studies on positive youth development. For example, roughly 11% of studies included the perspectives of parents, and only 7% included teachers, adult program leaders or youth development professionals. Only 3% focused on multiple adult stakeholders.

Table 1
Population Characteristics

	JRA	JA	JAR	JYD	Y&S	JYA	Total
Age							
Under 10	1 (4%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	7 (4%)	5 (7%)	9 (9%)	23 (5%)
10-12	5 (19%)	6 (12%)	4 (12%)	32 (18%)	15 (21%)	38 (38%)	100 (22%)
13-15	13 (50%)	27 (54%)	23 (62%)	136 (78%)	48 (66%)	54 (55%)	301 (65%)
16-18	16 (62%)	30 (60%)	27 (73%)	56 (32%)	51 (70%)	58 (59%)	238 (52%)
19-21	3 (12%)	8 (16%)	13 (35%)	11 (6%)	19 (26%)	19 (19%)	73 (16%)
22-25	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	1 (0%)	11 (15%)	8 (8%)	23 (5%)
Sex							
Boys	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	1 (0%)
Girls	2 (8%)	1 (2%)	1 (3%)	6 (3%)	9 (12%)	3 (3%)	22 (5%)
Both	23 (89%)	47 (94%)	35 (95%)	147 (83%)	56 (77%)	94 (95%)	402 (87%)
Adults							
Parents	1 (4%)	4 (8%)	4 (11%)	19 (11%)	8 (11%)	14 (14%)	50 (11%)
Professionals	6 (23%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	18 (10%)	4 (6%)	4 (4%)	32 (7%)
Other	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (2%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	5 (1%)
Multiple	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	5 (14%)	3 (2%)	2 (3%)	3 (3%)	14 (3%)

Note: JRA = *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, JA = *Journal of Adolescence*, JYD = *Journal of Youth Development*, JAR = *Journal of Adolescent Research*, Y&S = *Youth & Society*, JYA = *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*.

Note²: The "Age" category does not add to 100% because manuscripts could be placed in multiple categories; the "sex" category does not add to 100% because approximately 8% of the manuscripts did not use youth in their sample frame, or because they did not specify the sex of their sample; the "Adults" category does not add up to 100 because not all manuscripts included adult perspectives.

Methodological Approaches

Table 2 shows the breakdown of methodological approaches covered in the manuscripts reviewed for this analysis. The vast majority (93%) of manuscripts published were empirical in nature. For the purposes of this study, manuscripts were categorized as empirical if they consisted of “original research where data collection or secondary analysis of data took place” (Graham & Ismail, 2011, p. 127). Roughly 7% of the manuscripts published were non-empirical, and could generally be described as literature reviews, methodology discussions, or comments on theory. The *Journal of Youth Development* appeared more likely than the other major journals to publish manuscripts of this type.

Most of the articles published (63%) used traditional quantitative data collection and analysis techniques, including cross-sectional surveys, experimental or quasi-experimental design, or secondary data analysis. Of those reviewed, the *Journal of Adolescence* was the most likely to publish quantitative papers, although quantitative techniques were generally the methodology of choice for a majority of the manuscripts reviewed. Approximately one-third (30%) of manuscripts used qualitative or mixed methods. Qualitative methods included observation, interviews, focus groups, case studies, or historical/content analysis techniques, whereas multiple or mixed methods studies generally employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to answer their research questions.

Table 2
Methodological Approach

Methodological Approach	N	%
Quantitative Methods	292	63
Qualitative Methods	82	18
Multiple or Mixed Methods	54	12
Non-Empirical	34	7
Total	363	100.0

Table 3 provides a closer examination of the methodologies employed, both in the aggregate and by journal. For example, cross-sectional surveys or questionnaires were the most frequently used methodology (42%), followed by experimental or quasi-experimental designs (12%). Studies that used experimental, pre-experimental or quasi-experimental designs were those that made an effort to compare intervention effects with a suitable control group, or those where subjects served as their own controls, such as studies using a pre-test/post-test methodology (Creswell, 2009). Secondary data analysis accounted for 10% of the manuscripts published on positive youth development in the journals reviewed. *Youth & Society* appeared to have the largest percentage of studies utilizing secondary datasets.

The most frequently occurring qualitative technique was the use of interviews or focus groups (13%), followed by case studies (3%). The *Journal of Youth Development* was the most likely journal to publish case studies, reflecting its commitment to bridging research and practice. Other qualitative techniques (e.g. direct observation of behavior, historical and/or content

analysis) were used in less than 2% of the published manuscripts related to positive youth development. Multiple or mixed methods approaches accounted for approximately 12% of the total number of manuscripts published on positive youth development in the past 10 years, although more than 25% of the manuscripts published in the *Journal of Research on Adolescence* utilized multiple or mixed methods. Tables 2 and 3 show the breakdown of methodological approaches by journal and in the aggregate.

Table 3
Specific Methodologies Employed

	JRA	JA	JYD	JAR	Y&S	JYA	Total
Survey	9 (35%)	31 (62%)	38 (22%)	14 (38%)	27 (37%)	73 (74%)	192 (42%)
Experimental Design	1 (4%)	9 (18%)	40 (23%)	2 (5%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	54 (12%)
Direct Observation	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (2%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (1%)
Interviews/Focus Groups	4 (15%)	3 (6%)	26 (15%)	12 (33%)	9 (12%)	6 (6%)	60 (13%)
Case Studies	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	14 (8%)	1 (3%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	16 (3%)
Historical/Content Analysis	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)
Multiple or Mixed Methods	7 (27%)	5 (10%)	18 (10%)	6 (16%)	13 (18%)	5 (5%)	54 (12%)
Secondary Data Analysis	4 (15%)	0 (0%)	9 (5%)	1 (3%)	18 (25%)	14 (14%)	46 (10)
Literature Review, Theory Paper or Methodology Discussion	1 (5%)	2 (4%)	28 (16%)	0 (0%)	3 (4%)	0 (0%)	34 (7%)
Total	26 (100%)	50 (100%)	177 (100%)	37 (100%)	73 (100%)	99 (100%)	462 (100%)

Note: JRA = *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, JA = *Journal of Adolescence*, JYD = *Journal of Youth Development*, JAR = *Journal of Adolescent Research*, Y&S = *Youth & Society*, JYA = *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*

Research Settings

Table 4 provides a breakdown of the settings and contexts for youth development research. In addition to population characteristics and methodology, manuscripts were categorized based on the settings or contexts where research related to youth took place. Most studies took place in school (43%) or community-based organizational settings (21%). Studies of youth within the school context were dominant in all of the major research journals in the field. The *Journal of Youth Development* was more likely than the other journals to publish studies that took place within community-based organizational settings. Interestingly, fewer than 1 in 10 studies used the home/family as a research setting (8%), although more than one-third (39%) of the

manuscripts published in the *Journal of Research on Adolescence* had this focus. Research that took place within the neighborhood/community context was also underrepresented, with only 7% of manuscripts focusing on this ecology. Perhaps most surprisingly, none of the research manuscripts covered were identified as having taken place exclusively in faith-based settings or organizations.

A number of studies (21%) reported focusing on youth in multiple contexts. For example, the physical site of the research may have taken place within an afterschool program, yet the research questions themselves focused on academic achievement (school), family life (home/family) and involvement in structured activities outside of school (community-based organizations). As such, these studies did not focus on a specific youth development setting, but attempted to answer questions related to a range of ecological contexts. Notably, more than one-quarter of the manuscripts in *Youth & Society* and the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* focused on youth in multiple ecological contexts.

Table 4
Research Settings

	JRA	JA	JYD	JAR	Y&S	JYA	Total
Home/Family	10 (39%)	9 (18%)	5 (3%)	2 (5%)	6 (8%)	5 (5%)	37 (8%)
School	13 (50%)	32 (64%)	44 (25%)	18 (49%)	32 (44%)	59 (60%)	198 (43%)
Community-based organization	0 (0)	3 (6%)	80 (45%)	4 (11%)	4 (6%)	5 (5%)	96 (21%)
Neighborhood/community	3 (12%)	3 (6%)	13 (7%)	4 (11%)	10 (14%)	1 (1%)	34 (7%)
Faith-based organization	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Non-specific/Multiple	0 (0%)	3 (6%)	35 (20%)	9 (24%)	21 (29%)	29 (29%)	97 (21%)
Total	26 (100%)	50 (100%)	177 (100%)	37 (100%)	73 (100%)	99 (100%)	462 (100%)

Note: JRA = *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, JA = *Journal of Adolescence*, JYD = *Journal of Youth Development*, JAR = *Journal of Adolescent Research*, Y&S = *Youth & Society*, JYA = *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*

Topical Areas

A key component of this integrative review was the categorization of articles based on key themes or topical areas. This allowed us to identify the major thrusts and topical gaps in the research related to positive youth development in the manuscripts that we reviewed over the past 10 years. We used non-exclusive coding so that manuscripts might be placed in multiple categories to adequately capture the intent of the authors, and as a recognition that many of these topical areas overlapped and were addressed within the same study. The 12 main topical areas that emerged from the keyword analysis, along with the numbers and percentages of manuscripts categorized in each area, are listed in Table 5, and described below:

Table 5
Topical Areas

	JRA	JA	JYD	JAR	Y&S	JYA	Total
Professional Development	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	24 (14%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	25 (5%)
Youth Activities	7 (27%)	6 (12%)	74 (42%)	13 (35%)	29 (4%)	28 (28%)	157 (34%)
YD Processes and Outcomes	20 (87%)	32 (64%)	123 (70%)	15 (41%)	53 (73%)	32 (32%)	275 (60%)
Academic Performance	12 (46%)	11 (22%)	33 (19%)	15 (41%)	16 (22%)	26 (26%)	113 (24%)
PYD Influence on Risk Behavior	11 (42%)	23 (46%)	21 (12%)	3 (8%)	1 (1%)	19 (19%)	78 (17%)
Youth Engagement	16 (62%)	8 (16%)	79 (45%)	9 (24%)	13 (18%)	9 (9%)	134 (29%)
Resilience	3 (12%)	5 (10%)	8 (5%)	18 (49%)	3 (4%)	4 (4%)	41 (9%)
Asset- and Capacity-Building	18 (69%)	26 (52%)	71 (40%)	2 (5%)	2 (3%)	41 (41%)	160 (35%)
Health and Wellness	3 (12%)	6 (12%)	12 (7%)	3 (8%)	15 (21%)	26 (26%)	64 (14%)
Peer Relationships	3 (12%)	12 (24%)	7 (4%)	9 (24%)	12 (16%)	20 (20%)	63 (14%)
Family	13 (50%)	21 (42%)	15 (9%)	16 (43%)	21 (29%)	38 (38%)	124 (27%)
Youth/Adult Relationships	4 (15%)	4 (8%)	15 (9%)	6 (16%)	8 (11%)	10 (10%)	47 (10%)

Note: JRA = *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, JA = *Journal of Adolescence*, JYD = *Journal of Youth Development*, JAR = *Journal of Adolescent Research*, Y&S = *Youth & Society*, JYA = *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*

Note²: The column denominator is the total number of articles included in the review by journal; the denominator for the "Total" column is the sum of all of the included articles ($N=462$)

1. **Professional Development.** This topical area included manuscripts focusing on the needs and issues related to youth development staff, program leaders, and volunteers. Studies in this category tended to focus on issues related to professionalism, staff training, professional education, and worker competencies. Only 5% of the manuscripts covered in this review fit into this category. The *Journal of Youth Development* was the most likely to publish manuscripts related to professional development in the youth development field.
2. **Youth Activities.** Manuscripts that were placed in this topical area included those that focused on structured, intentional learning activities. This included manuscripts that

focused on youth development programs such as sports, camps, outdoor recreation, arts and drama, music, and after-school programs. Approximately one-third (34%) of manuscripts addressed specific youth development programs or activities. Again, the *Journal of Youth Development* was the most likely journal to publish manuscripts in this category.

3. *Youth Development Processes and Outcomes*. This topical area included manuscripts focusing on assessing program effectiveness, identifying the benefits or outcomes that accrue from participation in youth development programs, or examining how participation affects different groups of youth (e.g. age, gender, race/ethnicity). Manuscripts were also placed into this category that addressed the scalability of youth development programs, or studies that focused on activity participation as a program outcome. Almost two-thirds (60%) of the studies reviewed here were placed in this category. Many of these articles focused on the socio-demographics of program or activity participation, particularly regarding how program participation or outcomes differed based on the background of the youth involved.
4. *Academic Engagement*. This topical area included manuscripts related to academic performance, such as grades or test scores, and other areas of academic participation, such as school attendance. Manuscripts that focused on school connectedness or the school learning environment were also placed in this category. Almost one-fourth (24%) of the manuscripts reviewed were categorized in this area.
5. *Positive Youth Development Influence on Risk Behavior*. This topical area included manuscripts that addressed issues of risk behavior reduction as a result of positive youth development programs and strategies. Studies that addressed various forms of risk behavior, such as problem drinking, sexual behavior, violence, bullying or other forms of risk behavior were included in this analysis if the focus of the study related to the influence of positive youth development programs or contexts on mitigating these problems. Less than one-fifth (17%) of the manuscripts were categorized in this area. The *Journal of Research on Adolescence* and the *Journal of Adolescence* appeared more likely to publish articles that focused on the influence of positive youth development on risk behavior reduction.
6. *Youth Engagement*. Manuscripts were placed into this category if they dealt with the broad issue of youth participation and engagement. This included studies that focused on youth involvement in the community, participation in service learning activities, youth leadership roles, and youth voice. Less than one-third (29%) of the manuscripts reviewed focused on youth participation and engagement. Approximately 62% of the studies that were reviewed in the *Journal of Research on Adolescence* addressed this topical area.
7. *Resilience*. This topical area included studies that focused on positive youth development and youth thriving, particularly for young people living in high-risk environments. This included studies that addressed coping strategies, positive adjustment, and protective factors. Only 9% of the studies that were reviewed focused on issues related to resilience, although 49% of the papers reviewed in the *Journal of Adolescent Research* addressed some aspect of resilience.
8. *Asset- and Capacity-Building*. Manuscripts placed in this topical area included those that addressed the skills and competencies of youth. This included studies that incorporated models such as the 40 Developmental Assets, the Five C's, or that focused on skills such

as initiative, goal setting, effort, pro-social behavior, team functioning, and problem solving. More than one-third of the studies reviewed (35%) were placed in this category.

9. **Family.** This topical area included manuscripts focusing on family dynamics as they contribute to positive youth development. Manuscripts that were placed in this area included those that focused on family support, family rituals, parent involvement, sibling relationships, and family communication. Surprisingly, only 27% of the manuscripts reviewed addressed issues related to the family, although exactly half of the studies reviewed in the *Journal of Research on Adolescence* had this focus. At the other end of the spectrum, only 9% of the studies in the *Journal of Youth Development* appeared to have a focus on the family.
10. **Health and Wellness.** Manuscripts that were placed in this category were those that had a specific focus on physical health. This included papers that focused on physical activity promotion, maintaining or achieving a healthy weight, and healthy eating and nutrition. Despite the increasing attention given to adolescent health and physical activity, only 14% of the studies reviewed addressed health and wellness issues.
11. **Peer Relationships.** This topical area included studies that addressed issues related to peer support, friendships, peer-to-peer mentoring or other forms of positive peer relationships. Approximately 14% of the studies reviewed focused on peer relationships, with the highest percentage of studies in this area appearing in the *Journal of Adolescence* and the *Journal of Adolescent Research*.
12. **Youth-Adult Relationships.** Manuscripts placed in this category focused on the positive roles of non-parental adults in the lives of youth, including mentoring relationships, non-parental adult support, and role modeling. Despite the importance of non-parental adult role models and mentoring in the lives of youth, only 10% of the articles published addressed this topic directly. It appeared that most of the published studies in this area focused on formal mentoring programs.

Discussion and Recommendations

Integrative reviews provide a big-picture snapshot of the research literature and can help provide an understanding of the strengths and gaps in the body of knowledge of a particular field. This integrative review focused on the positive youth development research published between 2001-2010 in five top-tier youth journals (*Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *Journal of Adolescence*, *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *Youth & Society*, and the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*), as well as one research-to-practice journal (*Journal of Youth Development*). The findings and discussion related to the research on positive youth development provided in this paper should be taken within the scope of this analysis. However, several observations can be made with respect to the research covered in this effort.

First, the vast majority of research published in the major, top-tier youth journals did not fit into the category of positive youth development research. Generally speaking, manuscripts published about youth in the major research journals do not utilize a strengths-based approach or provide an examination of the processes that foster positive youth well-being. These approaches and processes come in the form of supports, opportunities, programs, and services that intentionally leverage positive youth outcomes. This finding mirrors research conducted in the field of positive psychology, where Myers (2000) found that the vast majority of articles published since 1967 focused on negative emotions vs. positive emotions. This may be reflective of the larger context in which research related to youth takes place. For example, it is

likely that funded research studies of the type that would most likely appear in top-tier research journals still reflect a bias towards a problem- or deficit-based view of young people. While several of the major research journals that were reviewed for this effort published one or more special issues devoted to positive youth development or positive psychology (e.g. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*), the major thrust of the papers in the regular issues was not reflective of a positive youth development perspective.

Second, the key transition stages from late childhood to adolescence, and from adolescence to adulthood appear understudied in the positive youth development literature. Much of the published research on positive youth development was focused on what could be considered to be the traditional definition of adolescence (roughly ages 13-18). While this makes sense, it is generally understood that the terms youth and adolescence focus on the second decade of life – roughly ages 10 to 20. Others have noted that the upper boundary of adolescence is now extending into the early to mid 20s (Larson, 2002). These more expansive definitions of youth are not widely reflected in the positive youth development research covered for this paper, given that roughly 1 in 5 published studies focused on youth between the ages 10-12 and between the ages of 19-21. Only 5% of published studies were found covering the ages of 22-25.

Third, the clear majority of the research that was reviewed involved both boys and girls. This is perhaps reflective of a positive youth development philosophy that addresses the strengths and abilities of all youth, rather than focusing on deficits or differences between groups of youth. It was interesting to note that while a small number of studies (5%) were exclusively focused on girls, we identified only one study that focused exclusively on boys from a positive youth development perspective.

Fourth, less than 10% of manuscripts included the perspectives of parents and the key adults who have an influence on youth. While it stands to reason that youth development research would focus primarily on young people themselves, it was curious that so few of the studies involved adults in the research design, or asked questions directly pertaining to the roles of parental and non-parental adults. In fact, only 8% of the total studies reviewed focused exclusively on adults. Given the tremendous influence that key adults have on positive youth development, more research focusing on this population needs to be undertaken.

Fifth, studies of youth that focus on critical developmental ecologies, such as the home and family, or studies that addressed youth in the context of their neighborhoods or larger communities, were underrepresented in this review. Of the studies reviewed in this analysis, the largest percentage examined positive youth development within the context of school or after-school settings, followed by studies that were situated within or involved youth in community-based organizations. This is perhaps understandable, particularly given the amount of time that youth spend in school and in structured programs and activities outside of school. However, given that positive youth development is influenced by the interplay of multiple ecologies, more research on the home, family, and neighborhood contexts and how they impact youth is needed.

Sixth, a majority of the studies used a quantitative approach in answering the research questions posed. Cross-sectional surveys—either in the form of paper/pencil or web-based questionnaires—were the most popular data collection tool. A relatively small number of studies engaged in secondary data analysis, such as those that answered questions using the *National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)* (Dodge & Lambert, 2009) or the *4-H*

Study on Positive Youth Development (Theokas, Lerner, Phelps, & Lerner, 2006). In addition, less than 15% of the published studies attempted to use some level of experimental design. While the difficulties of conducting experimental research in the social sciences are well noted, the relatively small number of studies that were classified in this category is potentially concerning, particularly with respect to the methodological rigor of the positive youth development research. Curiously, the *Journal of Youth Development* had approximately 23% of its manuscripts categorized as pre-experimental, quasi-experimental, or experimental. This may be reflective of the number of program evaluation studies that are published in the *Journal of Youth Development*. It should be noted that even though a study was classified as using an experimental design (or any other methodology for that matter), the quality of the research and the actual rigor of the study was beyond the scope of this review.

Qualitative studies and studies that used multiple or mixed methods accounted for less than one third of the published manuscripts in this review. While rigorous quantitative studies can provide data that allow researchers to measure program impact, compare groups, and generalize results, qualitative techniques, such as the use of grounded theory or ethnographic approaches, allow researchers to ask deeper questions that address the nature and meaning of positive youth development within the lived experiences of youth. Rigorous, research-based case studies of successful youth programs, settings or contexts can provide useful best-practices models that could possibly be replicated elsewhere. Finally, complex questions related to program effectiveness, resiliency, or community efficacy may be best answered by employing multiple methodological approaches. Positive youth development researchers should consider employing more diverse methodologies in answering the kinds of complex research questions that are most interesting to the field.

This review identified 12 main topical areas that best captured the breadth of positive youth development research. These 12 non-exclusive topical areas (i.e. studies could, and often did, encompass more than one topic) included professional development, youth activities, youth development processes and outcomes, academic engagement, positive youth development influence on risk behavior, youth engagement, resilience, asset- and capacity-building, family, health and wellness, peer relationships, and youth-adult relationships. It makes sense given the applied nature of the youth development profession that most published studies would reflect the field's focus on structured programs and activities. This was the case for the studies included in this review. A majority focused on the effectiveness of specific program interventions or the outcomes associated with participation in various program types (e.g. sports, camp, afterschool, outdoor, 4-H) for different kinds of youth. This review also uncovered several notable gaps, which are discussed below.

First, only 14% of the studies focused on issues related to health and wellness. This is surprising, given the recent attention on increasing rates of obesity, poor nutrition, and lack of physical activity among many youth. It is likely that a majority of the research concerning adolescent health is being published elsewhere. Publication outlets such as the *Journal of School Health*, *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, and *Journal of Adolescent Health* are likely places for research of this nature to be published. However, the connection between adolescent health and positive youth development approaches appears to have significant research potential, yet it has received scant attention in the major, top-tier research journals in the field.

Second, positive youth development and its relationship to the reduction of risk behavior accounted for less than one-fifth of the studies reviewed here. Similarly, research that

specifically addressed resiliency skills (e.g. coping, adjustment) encompassed just one tenth of the studies in this analysis. As we found in undertaking this review, the majority of research on youth tends to focus on a deficits- or problems-based perspective. However, exposure to positive youth development settings has been shown to have an inverse relationship with adolescent problem behavior (Scales & Leffert, 2004). It has been noted that research funding tends to follow studies that focus on vulnerable populations or that focus on risk behavior reduction. To that end, it stands to reason that more studies addressing the link between positive youth development programs, settings, and contexts and reducing youth risk behavior would be especially worthy of funding and support.

Third, studies focusing on topics related to the family, and studies that addressed positive peer influences, were not as frequently categorized in this review. Studies involving family perspectives were not as prevalent in the *Journal of Youth Development* in particular. This journal tends to have an applied focus, particularly with respect to bridging the gap between research and practice (with an emphasis on the youth development practitioner). However, research studies addressing the interaction between family life and positive youth development have immense practical implications for youth development organizations and professionals. Similarly, studies focusing on positive peer influences were noted in roughly 10% of the papers reviewed here. Given the enormous influence of peers and family on adolescent attitudes and behavior, it is safe to suggest that additional research addressing these areas from a positive youth development perspective is needed.

Fourth, the lack of studies that focused on the influence of non-parental adult relationships for youth was of particular concern. Most of the studies that addressed adult-youth relationships did so from the parent-child perspective, and most of these were not included in this review because they dealt with parent influences on negative or problematic outcomes or behaviors. Only 10% of the studies included in this review focused on the role that non-parental adults play in the lives of youth. Of these, most focused on formal mentoring programs, yet only a relative few addressed the natural mentoring roles that athletic coaches, neighbors, religious leaders, 4-H educators, or other non-parental adults play that have the potential to influence positive well-being.

Finally, only 5% of the papers reviewed dealt with professional development issues related to youth development workers, organizational leaders, or volunteers. It is quite possible that the bulk of the research focused on professional development for the youth development professional is published outside of the journals covered for this review. However, even the *Journal of Youth Development* which is more likely than the others to focus on professional development issues, published less than 14% of its papers on this topic. As the field of youth development grows, the professional identity of youth development workers is becoming more salient. More research addressing issues related to the unique professional development needs of youth workers, such as focusing on job competencies, training and education models, job motivation, burnout, and organizational commitment, among others, is needed.

Conclusion

Attempting to systematically describe the themes and trends in positive youth development research is an enormous undertaking, particularly given the various and diverse publication outlets that are available for this type of research. This integrative review is a first attempt at trying to understand what the youth development research literature looks like, with a particular focus on studies that have been published in five top-tier journals plus one applied research

journal over the last ten years. As this review found, positive youth development studies constitute a relatively small portion of the overall research base dealing with youth and adolescence. As the field matures, continuous and ongoing investigation of the methods, questions, rigor, and key findings related to positive youth development research will undoubtedly help the body of knowledge deepen and grow.

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Positive Youth Development: Processes, Programs, and Problematics

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Abstract: Using the tripartite conception of positive youth development (PYD) suggested by Hamilton (1999) – as a developmental process, a philosophy or approach to youth programming, and as instances of youth programs and organizations focused on fostering the healthy or positive development of youth – we review different theoretical models of the developmental process involved in PYD. In addition, we review the ideas for and the features of youth development programs aimed at promoting PYD. We discuss the need for research interrelating different, theoretically-predicated measures of PYD and, as well, the importance of clear links between models of the PYD developmental process and of the youth development programs seeking to enhance PYD among diverse youth. We discuss several conceptual and practical problematics that must be addressed in order to integrate the three facets of PYD scholarship.

Introduction

Interests in the strengths of youth, the plasticity of human development, and the concept of resilience coalesced in the 1990s to foster the development of the concept of positive youth development (PYD) (J.V. Lerner, Phelps, Forman, & Bowers, 2009). As discussed by Hamilton (1999), the concept of PYD was understood in at least three interrelated but nevertheless different ways:

1. as a developmental process
2. as a philosophy or approach to youth programming
3. as instances of youth programs and organizations focused on fostering the healthy or positive development of youth.

In the decade following Hamilton's (1999) discussion of PYD, several different models of the developmental process believed to be involved in PYD were used to frame descriptive or

explanatory research across the adolescent period (e.g., Benson, Scales, & Syversten, 2011; Damon, 2004; Larson, 2000; Lerner et al., 2005). As we argue below, all of these models of the developmental process reflect ideas associated with what are termed “relational developmental systems” conceptions of human development (e.g., Overton, 2010). However, it is unclear what particular model of developmental process is explicitly used in either “philosophical” approaches to youth programming pertinent to PYD or in particular instances of youth programs designed to foster PYD. This lack of integration represents one of several important obstacles to a fully reciprocal relation between practice and theory-predicated research in the service of the promotion of PYD.

A key goal of this article is to identify and propose means to address what we regard as “problematics” in the application of developmental science in the service of describing, explaining, and optimizing the course of development among diverse youth. To address this goal we will use the tripartite conception of PYD suggested by Hamilton (1999) as a frame to review briefly key instances of:

1. the different theoretical models of the PYD developmental process
2. philosophical ideas about, or conceptual approaches, to the nature of youth programming
3. key instances of programs aimed at promoting PYD.

We will conclude our discussion by pointing to a means to generate integrative, theoretically-predicated, evidence-based actions that would be appropriate to take by practitioners in youth programs, by youth-serving organizations, and by policy makers.

PYD as a Developmental Process

Developmental science seeks to describe, explain, and optimize intraindividual change and interindividual differences in intraindividual change across the life span (Baltes, Reese, & Nesselroade, 1977). The contemporary, cutting-edge theoretical frame for such scholarship involves relational developmental systems theoretical models (Overton, 2010). These models emphasize that the basic process of human development involves mutually influential relations between the developing individual and the multiple levels of his/her changing context. These bidirectional relations may be represented as individual \leftrightarrow context relations. These relations regulate (govern) the course of development (its pace, direction, and outcomes). When these “developmental regulations” involve individual \leftrightarrow context relations benefitting both the person and his or her ecology, they may be termed “adaptive” (Brandtstädter, 2006).

Examples of these models include Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), action theory models of intentional, goal-directed behaviors (e.g., Baltes, 1997; Brandtstädter, 2006; Heckhausen, 1999), Elder’s (1998) life-course theory, the Thelen and Smith (2006) approach to dynamic systems theory, Magnusson’s (1999; Magnusson & Stattin, 2006) holistic person-context interaction theory, and the Ford and Lerner (1992) and Gottlieb (1998) developmental systems formulations.

History, or temporality, is part of the ecology of human development that is integrated with the individual through developmental regulations. As such, there is always change and, as well, at least some potential for systematic change (i.e., for plasticity), across the life span (Lerner, 2002). This potential for change represents a fundamental strength of human development. Of

course, plasticity means that change for the better or worse can characterize any individual's developmental trajectory. Nevertheless, a key assumption of relational developmental systems theories is that the developmental system is sufficiently diverse and complex for some means to be found (by researchers, practitioners, or individuals themselves) to couple individual and context in manners that enhance the probability of change for the better, of promoting more positive features of human development (J.V. Lerner et al., 2009). Given the enormity of the individual and contextual changes characterizing the adolescent period, and the fact that, in adolescence, the individual has the cognitive, behavioral, and social relational skills to contribute actively and often quite effectively to his or her own developmental changes (Lerner & Walls, 1999), adolescence is an ideal "ontogenetic laboratory" for studying the plasticity of human development and for exploring how coupling individual and contexts within the developmental system may promote positive development during this period.

The Study of Adolescence within the Developmental System

Multiple dimensions of profound changes are prototypic of the adolescent period, involving levels of organization ranging from the physical and physiological, through the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral, and to the social relational and institutional. If adaptive developmental regulations emerge or can be fostered between the plastic, developing young person and features of his context (e.g., the structure and function of his/her family, school, peer group, and community), then the likelihood will be increased that youth may thrive (that is, manifest healthy, positive developmental changes) across the adolescent decade.

Predicated on relational developmental systems theory, the links among the ideas of plasticity, adaptive developmental regulations, and thriving suggest that all young people have strengths that may be capitalized on to promote more positive development across the adolescent years. For instance, one example of the emerging strengths of adolescents is their ability to contribute intentionally to the adaptive developmental regulations with their context (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2008). Such intentional self regulation may involve the selection of positive goals (e.g., choosing goals that reflect important life purposes), using cognitive and behavioral skills (such as executive functioning or resource recruitment) to optimize the chances of actualizing one's purposes and, when goals are blocked or when initial attempts at optimization fail, possessing the capacity to compensate effectively (Freund & Baltes, 2002).

The convergence of the ideas of plasticity, adaptive developmental regulations, and thriving enable the assertion that all young people constitute "resources to be developed" (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Increasingly, this strength-based view of adolescents has been used to study youth development within the United States (e.g., J.V. Lerner et al., 2009) and internationally (e.g., Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007; Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). Moreover, this research has been framed by the ideas of individual \leftrightarrow context relations within relational developmental systems models, and constitute a key view of the PYD developmental process. Hamilton (1999) pointed to these conceptions of the PYD developmental process as indicating the first way in which the concept of PYD was approached within the field of youth development.

Approaches to PYD as a Developmental Process

Current theoretical conceptions of the PYD developmental process have been framed within the relational developmental systems meta-theoretical perspective (e.g., see Damon, 2004; Larson, 2000, J. Lerner et al., 2009). Nevertheless, there are several different instantiations of this theoretical approach.

William Damon and the Study of Purpose.

William Damon (2008; Mariano & Damon, 2008) approaches the study of the PYD process through an examination of the development of purpose in youth. Damon notes that a central indicator of PYD and youth *thriving* (i.e. exemplary positive development; Lerner, 2004; Benson et al., 2011) is engagement in pursuits that serve the common welfare, and makes meaningful contributions to communities. Damon assesses the ways in which youth go beyond their own self-centered needs and extend outward to the pursuit of goals that benefit the world beyond.

To Damon (2008), a purpose is a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and is of intended consequence to the world beyond the self. It is an “ultimate concern” or overall goal for one’s life, helping to organize one’s life decisions and actions, and is thus manifested in one’s behavior. The purpose is internalized, or “owned” by the individual, and therefore is central to his or her identity. As such, the operational criteria of purpose are:

- the person must have *all* elements of the definition: something to accomplish, a beyond-the-self rationale, plans for future action, meaningfulness to self, and incorporation into one’s identity (that is, behavior that is not driven by oughts);
- the concern must function to organize the person’s decisions and activities in support of the concern;
- the person must manifest the concern with visible action; and
- the person cannot imagine himself/herself without the concern, it is necessary to do the activities related to the concern.

While Damon (2008) sees purpose as an indicator of PYD, he notes that a next step in his research will require a deeper understanding of the ways that young people are purposeful. Purposeful young people may indeed be contributing to something beyond themselves, but whether that contribution is for self-serving reasons and social approval, or an end in itself, may be an important distinction for understanding how purpose and contribution are associated with different facets of adolescent development.

Peter Benson and Search Institute and the Study of Developmental Assets.

The work of Peter Benson and his colleagues at Search Institute (e.g., Benson, 2008; Benson, Scales, & Syvertsen, 2011) have been integral in providing the vocabulary and vision about the strengths of young people and the communities in which they reside. Coining the term “developmental assets,” Benson and his colleagues describe “internal” or individual assets, which are a set of “skills, competencies, and values” of a young person, grouped by four categories (Benson et al., 2011):

1. commitment to learning
2. positive values
3. social competencies
4. positive identity.

These individual assets represent the talents, energies, strengths, constructive interests, and “sparks” that every young person possesses (Benson, 2008). Thriving occurs as a result of aligning these individual strengths with a community’s “external” or ecological assets, which are conceived as “environmental, contextual, and relational features of socializing systems” and are organized into four categories (e.g., Benson et al., 2011):

1. support
2. empowerment
3. boundaries and expectations
4. constructive use of time.

These developmental assets have been conceptualized in a way to emphasize and encourage their practical application by highlighting the role of communities in fostering well-being and positive development among young people. Current work by Benson and colleagues (e.g., Benson et al., 2011) seeks to extend the applicability of the approach to diverse youth, both in the U.S. and internationally.

Jacquelynne Eccles and the Study of Stage-Environment Fit and Motivation.

Jacquelynne Eccles' work focuses on elucidating how a "fit" between contextual variables (e.g., schools, families, and youth programs) and individual characteristics (e.g., expectations, values) contributes to the healthy, positive development of adolescents (e.g., Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Through a focus on assessing early and middle adolescents' transitions to junior high or middle school and participation in youth programs, Eccles and colleagues have forwarded a theoretically rich and empirically robust body of work indicating that schools and youth programs must be developmentally appropriate for the youth populations they serve in order to ensure a "stage-environment fit" that motivates adolescents and promotes their positive youth development (e.g., Eccles, 2004).

Much of Eccles' work examines the roles of motivational beliefs, values, and goals on an adolescent's positive development. In order to study these factors, Eccles and colleagues tested an expectancy-value model of achievement-related choices (e.g., Eccles, 2004). This model holds that an individual's activity choice, persistence, and performance are related to his or her expectations of success and value for the activity which, in turn, are also influenced by a variety of other personal and contextual factors (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Using this model, Eccles and colleagues have identified the various characteristics of schools that better support an adolescent's expectancy for success and value for academic goals (Eccles & Roeser, 2009). For example, these school characteristics include teacher's expectations for high student achievement and the provision of structured after-school activities (e.g., Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Eccles and colleagues have also found that several characteristics common to the United States education system, most notably the transition into junior high or middle school, often have adverse effects on young adolescents' motivation, achievement, and positive development (e.g., Eccles & Roeser, 2009).

Reed Larson and the Study of Motivation, Active Engagement, and Real-Life Challenges.

For Larson (2006), PYD is "a process in which young people's capacity for being motivated by challenge energizes their active engagement in development" (p. 677). For positive development to occur, the motivational system must become activated and remain engaged in multiple domains of development while young people deal with everyday real life challenges. Larson characterizes a young person's *initiative* as both a key component of PYD and, as well, an important focal point for youth development programs seeking to promote PYD (Larson, 2000). Defining initiative as "the capacity to direct cumulative effort over time toward achievement of a long term goal" (Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005, p. 160), Larson (2000) posits that initiative is a central requirement for "components of PYD, such as creativity, leadership, altruism, and civic engagement" (p. 170).

Larson's work looks at the match between the experiences of adolescents and the requirements of the adult world they are preparing to enter. He seeks to understand this integration by describing the diversity of developmental tasks, skills, and competencies adolescents need to develop to transition successfully into adulthood in different cultures. With his focus on agency and initiative, much of the recent work by Larson and colleagues focuses on how youth development programs can best develop these and related skills in participating youth (e.g., Dawes & Larson, 2011). Larson has suggested that across diverse programs, an important component for the development of initiative may be the concurrent development of personal connections with adult leaders or other participating peers.

Out-of-school-time (OST) activities are key program contexts Larson has considered in depth. OST programs with structured activities are seen as contexts in which youth can act as producers of their own positive development (Eccles & Gootman, 2002); such programs offer opportunities to develop skills and competencies necessary for negotiating the real world (Mahoney, Vandell, Simkins, & Zarrett, 2009). These skills and competencies include taking initiative, developing leadership, and learning responsibility, as well as strategic and teamwork skills (e.g., Larson, 2000; Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005). At the same time, participation in structured OST activities may be associated with negative experiences such as stress, inappropriate adult behavior, negative influences, social exclusion, and negative group dynamics. Accordingly, Larson seeks to specify the approach that needs to be taken in community-based, OST programs in order to promote PYD.

Margaret Beale Spencer and the PVEST Model.

Margaret Beale Spencer's Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) is a dynamic and systemic framework for studying development that takes into account structural factors, cultural influences, and individual experiences, as well as individuals' perceptions of these features (Spencer, 2006). A central component of this model is an emphasis on the ways in which youth make sense of their contexts, and the role that these understandings play in their perceptions of events, people, and opportunities in their environments. The work of Spencer and her colleagues has focused on how minority American youth evaluate themselves based on the stereotypes and biases of others, particularly in the context of stressful risk environments (Spencer, 2006). The PVEST model emphasizes the role of coping strategies that youth develop in different contexts, which in turn provide feedback regarding the adolescent's emerging identity and lead to positive or negative developmental outcomes.

An important theoretical idea within the PVEST model for the study of PYD is that youth from diverse backgrounds will experience the same events and settings through different lenses, which can yield different interpretations and effects. While an after-school homework club might promote academic competence for some youth, for others the same context might evoke reminders of earlier unavailability of resources, such as access to books and teacher help. The effectiveness of this asset, then, is likely to vary according to youth perceptions of this setting. Accordingly, Spencer argues that the role of structural inequality must be considered within this approach to PYD.

Stephen Hamilton and Mary Agnes Hamilton and Positive Adolescent-to-Adult Transitions.

The scholarship of Hamilton and Hamilton (e.g., Hamilton, 1994; Hamilton & Hamilton, 2009) elucidates the developmental processes that encompass the transition from adolescence to adulthood, with a particular emphasis on the school-to-work transition and the role of adults, programs, and institutions in supporting this transition. The transition to adulthood is defined by

changes in social roles, as adolescents shift from being dependent upon adults to being capable of caring for self and others. This shift is structured by the many contexts in which a youth is embedded – family, school, work, society.

The Hamiltons' scholarship helps frame understanding of the issues faced by youth trying to connect school and work. In addition, they offer ideas for policies and programs useful for enhancing the school-to-work connection for all youth and, in particular, for those adolescents who seek full-time employment immediately after completion of high school. For instance, studying adolescents and young adults from seven nations – United States, Germany, Japan, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, and Sweden – Hamilton (1994) noted that "Adolescents who believe their current efforts will bring them closer to a desirable future are far more likely to work hard in school and avoid self-destructive behavior than those who are either unable to think about the future or who believe their prospects are beyond their control" (pp. 267-268).

To attain the link they desire between their adolescent school context and their young adult work context, adolescents must consider two key facets of the worlds of education and work/career: transparency and permeability. Transparency involves seeing through the intricacies of the stated and the unstated rules of the educational system and the labor market, and permeability involves the amount of effort needed to move from one career plan to another.

Ann Masten and the Study of Resilience.

Masten (2001) notes that to be considered "resilient," an individual must not only be identified as experiencing adversity, but he or she must also be deemed as doing "good" or "OK" in terms of the quality of adaptation or developmental outcome. Accordingly, her work involves "understanding behavior problems in the full context of human development... focus(ing) on variations in adaptation" (Masten, 2004, p. 311). She believes that research on positive and maladaptive functioning and development are mutually informative (Masten, 2001, 2004).

Masten's work on determining what constitutes positive adaptation focuses on competence in age-salient developmental tasks (e.g., Masten, 2001; Masten, Obradović, & Burt, 2006). Thus, resilience is a dynamic construct, as developmentally appropriate tasks vary according to the age of the individual as well as to the cultural and historical context in which the individual was raised. Competence in managing the salient developmental tasks of one's sociocultural context is also a multidimensional assessment of adaptation, as there are multiple tasks during any given developmental stage in any given place at any given time. Within this framework, maladaptive development would be operationalized as failure to meet the expectations of a given society for several domains of development or for one major domain (Masten, 2001).

According to Masten (2001), resilience occurs as the result of mutually-influential individual ↔ context relations. Therefore, young people whose lives are characterized as resilient may be identified not only by the competence they develop with respect to developmental tasks, but also by the quality of resources available to them. This conceptual orientation has led Masten to study the cascades of individual ↔ context relations that are linked to the presence of resilience in adolescent development, arguing that different interactions occur in developing systems and result in spreading effects across levels, among domains at the same level, and across different systems or generations, that is, the different interactions have cumulative consequences for development (e.g., Masten & Cicchetti, 2010).

Richard M. Lerner, Jacqueline V. Lerner, and Colleagues and the Study of Individual ↔ Context Relational Processes and PYD.

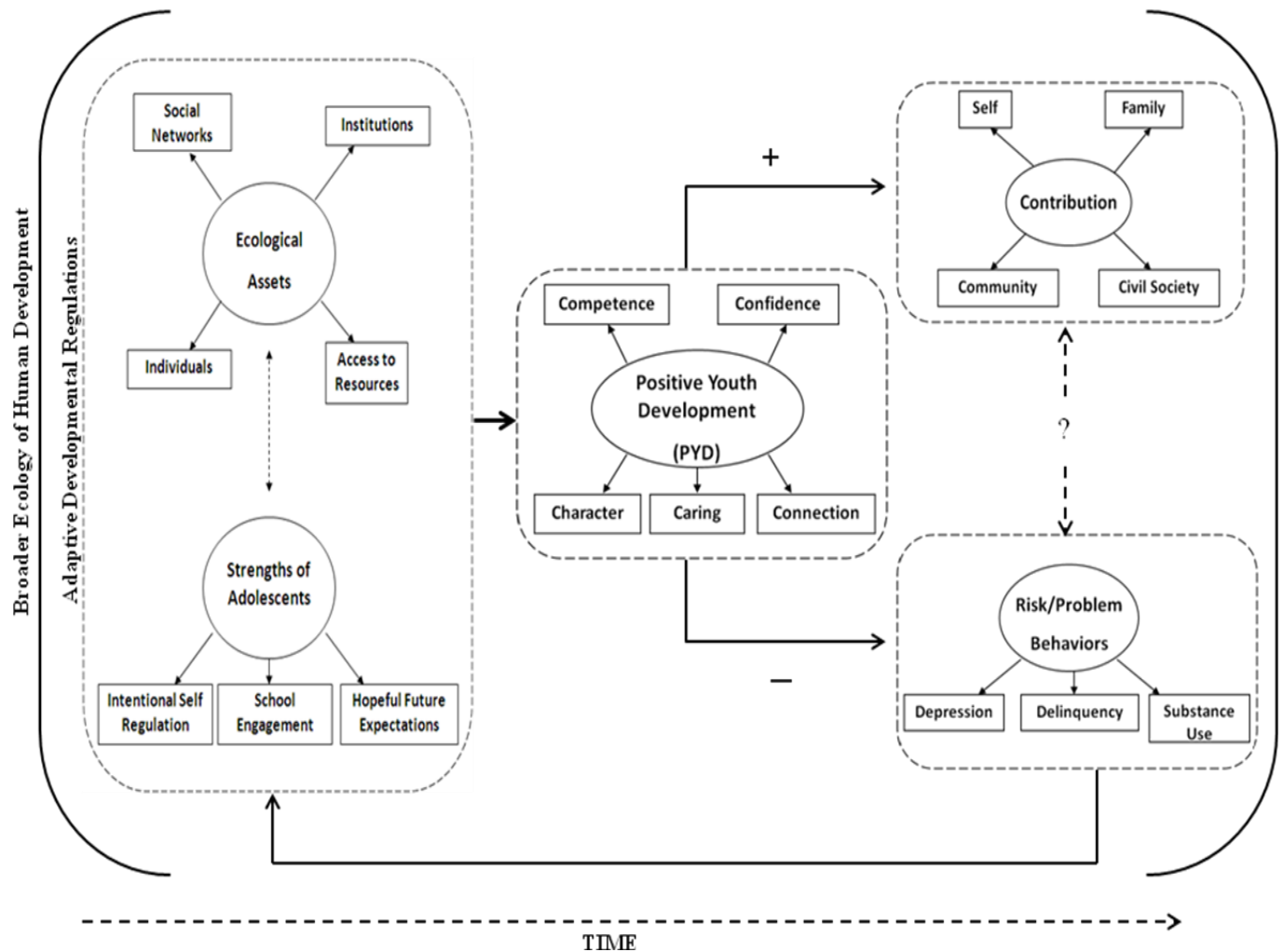
Lerner, Lerner, and colleagues have conducted longitudinal research that seeks to identify the individual and ecological relations that may promote thriving and that, as well, may be linked to lower levels of risk/problem behaviors. This research is exemplified by the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development (e.g., R.M. Lerner et al., 2005), in which thriving is conceptualized as the growth of the “Five Cs” of PYD – Competence, Confidence, Character, Connection, and Caring (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; R.M. Lerner et al., 2005; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

A key hypothesis tested is that if (a) the strengths of youth – for example, a young person’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement with the school context, having the “virtue” of hope for the future, or possession of the intentional self-regulation skills of Selection [S], Optimization [O], and Compensation [C] – can be aligned with (b) the resources for positive growth found in families, schools, and communities, for instance, the capacities of adults to provide for young people a nurturing, positive milieu in which their strengths may be enhanced and positively directed (e.g., Rhodes & Lowe, 2009), then (c) young people’s healthy development may be optimized (R.M. Lerner, 2004). In addition, given that positively developing youth should be involved in adaptive developmental regulations, then a thriving young person should act to contribute to the context that is benefiting him or her; youth should contribute to self, family, community, and civil society (Bowers et al., 2010; Jeličić, Bobek, Phelps, Lerner, & Lerner, 2007; R.M. Lerner et al., 2005).

In other words, if positive development rests on mutually-beneficial relations between the adolescent and the assets of his/her ecology, then thriving youth should be positively engaged with and act to enhance their world. As well, they should be less prone to engage in risk/problem behaviors. Figure 1 presents an illustration of this conception of the PYD developmental process.

Figure 1

A relational developmental systems model of the individual \leftrightarrow context relations involved in the Lerner and Lerner conception of the PYD developmental process.



Conclusions

As we turn now to a discussion of PYD as a philosophy or approach to understanding, or conceptualizing, youth programs, we may note that many contributors to this literature indicate an awareness of the theoretical literature about developmental processes. However, we may note also that there is little explicit linkage between intraindividual changes included in these processes and specific components of the philosophy or approach.

PYD as a Philosophy or Approach to Youth Programming

The second component of Hamilton's (1999) definition of PYD is that it is a philosophy or approach to youth programming. There are numerous excellent examples of this second facet of PYD, the most prominent and influential one being the Eccles and Gootman (2002) National Academy of Sciences report on community programs to promote youth development. The report discusses the design, implementation, and evaluation of community programs for youth and conceptualizes PYD in regard to the skills, knowledge, and other personal and social assets

required to move successfully from healthy adolescence into competent adulthood. Eccles and Gootman (2002) based their report on the work of scholars who contributed to the National Academy of Sciences' Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth. These scholars defined four domains of individual assets that represent health and well-being in adolescence:

1. physical development
2. intellectual development
3. psychological and emotional development
4. social development.

They noted that positive development does not require possession of all assets. Having more assets, however, is better than having fewer and it is beneficial to have assets in all four domains. Eccles and Gootman (2002) indicated that these assets do not exist in a vacuum and do not in themselves ensure the well-being of adolescents. Youth need access to contexts that facilitate their development through exposure to positive experiences, settings, and people, and to contexts that provide opportunities to develop and refine real-life skills. It is important for every community to have an array of programs for youth that, taken together, offer all features of positive developmental settings.

Some of the features that characterize such positive developmental settings include physical and psychological safety, appropriate structure, and positive social norms. These contexts provide opportunities to enjoy supportive relationships, to belong, to build skills and to feel empowered by experiencing efficacy and a sense of mattering. Moreover, these settings need to be synergistic with efforts and perspectives of the adolescents' families, as well as with the communities in which both the programs and the adolescents reside. While acknowledging the list as provisional, Eccles and Gootman (2002) suggested that youth-serving professionals take these factors into consideration when planning, designing, and evaluating programs for the youth with whom they work.

Many other philosophies/approaches to youth programs exist (e.g., see Dryfoos, 1990; Dukakis, London, McLaughlin, & Williamson, 2009; Heck & Subramaniam, 2009). For instance, Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, and Arthur (2002) and Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins (2004) identified several characteristics that mark effective youth development programs, for instance, a structured curriculum and measured reductions in problem behaviors, increases in positive behavior, or most optimally, both types of outcomes. In addition, effective programs were delivered over a period of at least nine months and were implemented with quality, consistency, and fidelity to the standards established by the program's model. Moreover, Catalano et al. (1999, 2004) specified the set of positive outcomes that effective youth programs fostered. Specifically, they noted that programs were effective when they promoted at least five of fifteen outcomes in youth, including:

- bonding
- resilience
- social competence
- emotional competence
- cognitive competence
- behavioral competence
- moral competence
- self-determination

- spirituality
- self-efficacy
- clear and positive identity
- belief in the future
- recognition for positive behavior
- opportunities for prosocial involvement
- prosocial norms.

In turn, Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) investigated community-based programs to understand what exactly is meant by the term “youth development program.” They identified three critical characteristics of such programs:

1. specific program activities
2. atmosphere
3. goals.

Moreover, they noted that the goals of youth development programs go beyond prevention to include the promotion of positive development. They are characterized by an atmosphere of hope, caring, safety, cultural appropriateness and respect of adolescents’ abilities to make choices and bear responsibility. Program activities provide opportunities for active involvement and meeting new challenges.

Similarly, Blum (2003) identified four elements critical to successful youth interventions: People, Contributions, Activities, and Place. Successful interventions are those that build strong adult-youth relationships (People), include active involvement of youth in giving back to family, school, and community (Contributions), offer productive and recreational opportunities for youth (Activities), and provide a safe environment free from drugs and violence with adult supervision (Place).

Building on the work of both Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) and Blum (2003), as well as others (e.g., Rhodes, 2002), R. M. Lerner (2004) argued that there are three fundamental characteristics of effective PYD programs. These “Big Three” characteristics are:

1. Positive and sustained adult-youth relations, relations (relations between a young person and an adult who is competent, caring, and continually available, for at least a year, such as a mentor, coach, or teacher)
2. Life-skill building activities (e.g., enhancing skills pertinent to the selection, optimization, and compensation skills we discussed earlier; Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2008)
3. Opportunities for youth participation in and leadership of valued family, school, and community activities.

Lerner argued as well that these features of youth programs needed to be simultaneously and integratively present for PYD to be effectively promoted.

In addition, Heck and Subramaniam (2009) described five other youth development program philosophies/approaches or, in their terms, development frameworks, which they defined as a

conceptualization that “helps give direction and purpose to a program” (p. 2). The five frameworks they discuss are:

1. Targeting Life Skills
2. Developmental Assets (as conceptualized by Search Institute; e.g., Benson, Scales, Hamilton, and Sesma, 2006)
3. The Four Essential Elements
4. The Five Cs
5. The Community Action Framework for Youth Development.

In their review, Heck and Subramaniam (2009) compared the strengths and limitations of the five models in terms of their effectiveness, which is evaluated by the criteria of validity (scientific evidence), utility (extent of use and availability of instruments), and universality (applicability to various populations).

The Targeting Life Skills model details the life skills encapsulated by 4-H’s Heart, Hands, Head, and Health (Hendricks, 1996); this model is meant to serve as a plan for youth programming. Each of the four components is composed of two general categories of skills, with the two categories composed of more specific life skills. For example, “Hands” is divided into working and giving; giving is further divided into community service, leadership, responsible citizenship, and contributions to group effort; working is further divided into marketable skills, teamwork, and self motivation. The model helps to identify specific skills that a youth-based program should focus on, rather than being a theoretical model of development (Heck & Subramaniam, 2009).

The Developmental Assets model as conceptualized by the Search Institute (Benson et al., 2011) identifies resources available to young people that promote positive development. Benson and colleagues have generated a list of 40 developmental assets, both internal and external to young people, that have been linked to positive youth outcomes. We noted earlier the internal and external asset categories studied by Benson et al. (2011). As indicated as well in the approach forwarded by Eccles and Gootman (2002), higher levels of assets have been related to positive developmental outcomes, such as higher school achievement, better physical health, lower levels of risk behaviors, and resilience (e.g., Benson et al., 2011). Heck and Subramaniam (2009) reported that research (and evaluation) about the application of the Developmental Assets model to youth programs is sparse.

The Four Essential Elements of Youth Development are identified as belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence and were originally proposed as the “Circle of Courage” (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990). These four elements were further subdivided into eight elements that were identified as critical to developing positive youth outcomes in youth development programming (Peterson et al., 2001). Belonging includes having relationships with caring adults, an inclusive environment, and a safe environment; mastery includes opportunities for mastery and engagement in learning; generosity consists of the opportunity to value and practice service for others; and independence includes opportunities to see oneself as an active participant in the future and the opportunity for self-determination.

The Community Action Framework for Youth Development (Gambone, Klem, & Connell, 2002; Gambone & Connell, 2004) includes five hierarchical organized strategies for use by both practitioners and scientists. These five strategies are building community capacity and

conditions for change; implementing community strategies to enhance supports and opportunities for youth; increasing supports and opportunities for youth; improving youth development outcomes; and improving long-term outcomes in adulthood. To implement these strategies programs must meet five key requirements: adequate nutrition, health and shelter; multiple supportive relationships; challenging and engaging activities and experiences; meaningful opportunities for involvement; and physical and emotional safety. The Community Action Framework for Youth Development is intended to create communities in which all young people can optimize their potential. The Framework is meant to be a systematic approach to planning, implementing, and evaluating programs and resources for youth. In this regard, the Framework does enumerate supports and opportunities that overlap with the elements of effective youth programs presented in other approaches.

In turn, as noted earlier in the discussion of the Lerner, Lerner, and colleagues' relational developmental systems model of the PYD process (e.g., R.M. Lerner, et al., 2005), the Five Cs model of youth development conceptualizes PYD as composed of Five Cs – Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character and Caring. The Cs are a means to operationalize the developmental characteristics that a youth needs to become a successful and contributing member of society. These Five Cs were linked to the positive outcomes of youth development programs reported by Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003). In addition, these "Cs" are prominent terms used by practitioners, adolescents involved in youth development programs, and the parents of these adolescents in describing the characteristics of a "thriving youth" (King et al., 2005).

Heck and Subramaniam (2009) indicate that each of the above-noted five approaches has varying levels of empirical support. However, none of the frameworks have been linked to research that provides evidence of universal applicability, although from a relational developmental systems perspective, such universality is not even possible, given that the world is seen as variegated and changing (R.M. Lerner, 2002; Overton, 2010). They indicated, however, that the Five Cs Model of PYD is the most empirically supported framework to date. Empirical evidence indicates that this construct has good psychometric properties (e.g., Bowers et al., 2010).

While the Five Cs model may be an empirically useful means to study the PYD process, it is not clear from the conceptualization of the Five Cs model how to translate it into a specific youth development program. Work on such translation is beginning, however, in regard to coaching youth sports programs (e.g., Haskins, 2010) and to mentoring programs for youth (Napolitano, Bowers, Gestsdóttir, & Chase, 2011).

In addition, Heck, Subramaniam, and Carlos (2010) discuss a sixth framework, the Step-It-Up-2-Thrive Theory of Change that was formulated by the Thrive Foundation for Youth. The Thrive Foundation developed this model in collaboration with several developmental scientists and has produced material for use in mentoring programs. The goal of this theory of change is to put youth on thriving trajectories. The theory is composed of several research-based components that build upon each other and follow a logical sequence in order to improve the likelihood that a youth will thrive:

1. Identify and develop "sparks" (Benson, 2008);
2. Adopt a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006);
3. Reflect on twelve indicators of thriving (that can be organized within the Five Cs of PYD and the "Sixth C" of youth contribution; Jeličić, et al., 2007; R. M. Lerner et al.,

2005), and identify indicators to focus on as part of the mentoring relationship (King et al., 2005; R.M. Lerner et al., 2005); and

4. Build goal management skills through goal selection, pursuit of strategies, and shifting approaches in the face of challenges (e.g., Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007, 2008).

The Step-It-Up-2-Thrive model emphasizes also the importance of positive and caring relationships between an adult and youth, foci that are emphasized in other PYD approaches to youth programming (such as “The Big Three” described earlier).

Finally, Dukakis et al. (2009) argue that, in order to understand how to support the positive development of youth, practitioners need to focus on more than indicators of individual outcomes. They argue that a tri-level perspective that considers the context of youth development “is critical to identifying implementation issues associated with policies and practices intended to facilitate youth development and to addressing shortfalls and sharing successes” (p. 2). They present a model that specifies:

1. Individual-level indicators, that is, indicators of the progress of a young person along a PYD path and the outcomes of PYD;
2. Setting-level indicators, that is, indicators of the resources associated with or the opportunities provided by a youth program; and
3. System-level indicators, meaning indicators of the policy context pertinent to youth and of the youth development infrastructure present in a neighborhood, community, state, or nation.

Conclusions

The philosophies/approaches we have briefly summarized provide both researchers and practitioners with potentially useful ways to think about the characteristics and qualities of effective youth development programs. The suitability of the selection of any particular philosophy/approach by program planners will likely be based on the features that seem particularly relevant to the program they lead (Heck & Subramaniam, 2009). In addition, this selection should be derived from the practitioner’s use of a particular theory of change that is embedded within a specific model of the PYD process.

We have noted that it is often not clear that specific theoretical models of the PYD process have been used to shape the philosophies/approaches to PYD programs. In addition, it is ironically the case that, when such a connection seems evident (e.g., as appears to be the case with both the Developmental Assets framework and the Five Cs model; Heck & Subramaniam, 2009), it is unclear how these theories of process provide a specific approach to (i.e., a particular logic model for) youth programs. As we have noted, work on this translation is only in its nascent period (Haskins, 2010; Napolitano et al., 2011), despite some correspondence between elements of the theoretical models and some features or targeted outcomes of the philosophy/approach to youth programming, for example, involving a focus on both the individual and the context (for instance, on the significance of positive adult-youth relationships). In turn, there exists also a need for more clarity about connections between philosophies/approaches to youth programs and particular instances of programs aimed at promoting PYD.

PYD as Instances of Youth Programs' and Organizations' Focus

In the U. S. there are literally thousands of instances of community-based programs that seek to promote PYD (e.g., Dryfoos, 1990; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Mahoney, et al., 2009) or its theoretically-related outcomes, for example, active engaged citizenship (Zaff, Kawashima-Ginsberg, & Lin, 2011); as well, there are numerous national organizations that seek to provide such programs throughout the U.S., including 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA, and Girls Inc. (e.g., Zaff, et al., 2011). Discussing these programs or organizations in detail is obviously beyond the scope of this article. Our purpose here is to illustrate the third instance of Hamilton's (1999) tripartite definition of PYD and point to the current nature of the connections between this facet of PYD and the other two facets we have discussed.

There are many instances of programs that are effective in promoting PYD, operationalized for instance in regard to the links between program characteristics and the development or enhancement of one or more of the Five Cs (e.g., see Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Accordingly, we will use one exemplary PYD program as a sample case of the sorts of programs to which Hamilton (1999) pointed. We may capitalize here on the scholarship of Flay and colleagues (Flay, 2002; Flay & Allred, 2003), who have pointed to a comprehensive youth program, one that focuses on promoting healthy, positive development of children and youth in many domains, including academics, problem behaviors, and family relationships, as such an exemplary PYD program. Flay (2002) argued that PYD requires comprehensive health promotion programs. He explained that "to prevent problem behaviors and promote positive behaviors [we need] comprehensive, coherent, and integrated approaches" to youth programs (p. 407).

Flay and Allred (2003) illustrate such a program by describing the long-term effects of the "Positive Action" program. Features of this school-based program include interventions with the individual child or adolescent, the school, and the family. At all levels, the interventions within the program focus on the same broad concept (feeling good about oneself when taking positive actions). The specific content includes six units:

1. self-concept
2. positive actions for body and mind
3. social/emotional positive actions for managing yourself responsibly
4. social/emotional positive actions for getting along with others
5. social/emotional positive actions for being honest with yourself and others
6. social/emotional positive actions for improving continually.

A 2006 review by the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP) notes that the Positive Action program is indeed an integrated and comprehensive program, due to evidence that it is effective in improving academic achievement and school attendance and, in turn, in diminishing problem behaviors such as substance use, violence, suspensions, disruptive behaviors, dropping out, and sexual behavior. Of course, evaluations of the effectiveness of comprehensive PYD programs like this are limited (cf. Catalano, et al., 1999). Indeed, most youth development programs in the U.S. are not evaluated (e.g., see Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998). However, the evaluation data pertinent to the Positive Action program, such as that provided by Beets et al. (2009), indicates that students who participated in the program were less likely to engage in substance use, violence, and sexual

activity than students who did not participate in the intervention, based on student self-report and teachers' reports. This evaluation, however, has limitations in terms of sample; it includes only young adolescents (fifth grade students) in a specific geographical and cultural setting (Hawaii).

Nevertheless, despite such limitations of a particular evaluation research study, the Positive Action program has demonstrated effectiveness and is an excellent example of the third facet of the definition of PYD discussed by Hamilton (1999). Moreover, in including in its design a comprehensive, individual and contextual approach to intervention, the Positive Action program reflects key ideas found within instances of the other two facets of Hamilton's (1999) tripartite definition of PYD.

Conclusions

As was the case with the links between theoretical models of the PYD process and philosophies/approaches to PYD programs, there are consistencies between what actions occur within actual, exemplary PYD programs and these two other facets of the Hamilton (1999) tripartite conception of PYD. However, these connections are often not drawn explicitly by practitioners enacting PYD programs.

Indeed, across the work associated with these three facets of Hamilton's (1999) definition, these domains of the PYD field exist as Venn diagrams whose degrees of overlap remain uncertain. We believe this lack of specification, and the incomplete integration of the domains of basic and applied scholarship pertinent to PYD that it reflects, constitutes a challenge to best advancing knowledge of how to understand and promote thriving among diverse youth. There are several problematics involved in increasing the integration among the three domains of scholarship pertinent to PYD.

Problematics of Integrating the Three Domains of PYD Scholarship

The lack of integration within and across each domain of PYD scholarship provides uncertainties in regard to understanding how to optimize PYD. In regard to the theoretical models of the PYD process, there is a lack of integration of both the structural and measurement models framing empirical tests of the models. For instance, the measurement of ecological development assets differs between the research of Lerner and Lerner and their colleagues (e.g., see Theokas & Lerner, 2006; Urban, Lewin-Bizan, & Lerner, 2010) and the research of Benson and colleagues at Search Institute (e.g., Benson et al., 2011). Similarly, variation exists in regard to the conceptualization and measurement of the motivational, purposive, or goal-oriented behaviors of interest to Damon (2008), Eccles (e.g., Eccles & Roeser, 2009; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), Larson (2000), and Gestsdóttir and Lerner (2007, 2008). Even more abstractly, there is little information about whether, across theoretical models, there exist similar views about the actions that are integrated within individual \leftrightarrow context relations of interest in all theories.

Given such variation, there is no certainty that similar empirical referents exist in regard to information about the PYD process. Such uncertainty makes it problematic to achieve any consensus about what variables, from what levels of organization within the developmental system, must be integrated in what specific ways, at what points in adolescence, to optimize what specific outcomes. Clearly, in the face of this uncertainty, what is needed is cross-laboratory integration of measurement models, perhaps through the use of a multitrait-multimethod matrix method (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). However, the practical challenge of

gaining the funds for such field-integration research it itself a major problematic constraining the advancement of knowledge about PYD.

Similar problematics can be raised in regard to integrating the different philosophies of or approaches to PYD programming. What are the fundamental defining characteristics of an effective PYD program? Do scholars use different terms for the same latent construct? For instance, when Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) think of program characteristics they believe to instantiate PYD-promoting activities, atmosphere, and goals are they pointing to the same actions as those envisioned by Blum (2003) when he discusses people, contributions, activities, and place or by R.M. Lerner (2004) when he discusses positive and sustained adult-youth relations, life skill-building activities, and opportunities for participation in and leadership of valued activities? The answer is not certain. Accordingly, it may be that there should be a “conceptual meta-analysis,” perhaps undertaken in the context of a working group of scholars and practitioners involved in a thorough review of the theoretical and empirical bases from which their philosophies/approaches were derived. Again, however, issues of funding make such an undertaking problematic.

Moreover, a similar lack of integration exists in regard to the numerous instances of PYD programs. Are actions labeled in the same way actually implemented identically? In different instantiations of the “same” program, is there high fidelity of implementation? Here, answers are particularly difficult to attain because, again, most youth programs in the U.S. are not evaluated and, as well, key elements of any effective program – most critically, a theory of change and a logic model – are absent from most programs (e.g., see Roth, et al., 1998). Such errors of omission preclude scientifically rigorous evaluation and, make empirical comparisons across different programs or among different instantiations of the same program highly problematic if not impossible.

Conclusions

The fundamental problematic we face is one that is, unfortunately, traditional within the youth development field. This is the challenge of systematic integration of theory, research, and application, of creating a means through which we can overcome the conceptual, professional, and economic obstacles to coalescing theory, understanding of best practice, and the expertise of practitioners committed to enhancing the thriving of the youth with whom they work. Without such integration we cannot know what specific features (structures or functions/actions), of what specific PYD programs, for what specific youth, of what specific ages (or races, ethnicities, religions, sexes, ability statuses, immigrant status, areas of residence, regions, etc.), from what specific families, and from what specific communities, result in what specific immediate and what specific long-term outcomes. We cannot answer completely this admittedly complex question, but this question – brought to the fore by relational developmental systems theory – is precisely the question we need to answer to promote PYD among the diverse young people of our nation and world.

It has been a little more than ten years since Hamilton initially formulated the three components of PYD. Perhaps it is too much to expect in such a young area of scholarship to have the level of integration to which we are pointing. Nevertheless, we believe that as all members of the PYD scholarly community – both researchers and practitioners – come together in the service of making such integration a high-priority agenda item, funders of PYD scholarship and application will take actions to support such integrated work. Accordingly, we are hopeful that in the next 10 years we will see enhanced integration and more knowledge of

the complex multilevel questions pertinent to promoting PYD. We look forward to a fully mature field of PYD that integrates research and practice.

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Abstract: For years, 4-H has emphasized the value of being a research-based youth organization in its long term association with the land-grant university system. But, it was the general consensus among state and national leaders that the program had no research base. The main objectives of this study were to: locate and document research studies conducted (between 1911-2010) in order to support or dispel notions about the lack of 4-H research and its focus on cows and cooking, to make information about the research studies available to the larger community of youth program practitioners and researchers and provide a general review of research topics by decade. Three thousand five hundred and fifty six studies were found over a thirteen year period and only one percent of these related to "cows or cooking." To make the data available to current and future youth professionals and researchers, the information about each study was transferred to an Internet web-site. Finally, a full century of research topics were summarized.

Need for the Study

The role of research within many nonprofit youth organizations has experienced a steep rise in importance (Bialeschki & Conn, 2011). Research data are pivotal when: "...documenting issues, [providing] potential solutions to problems, and [acquiring the] resources needed to make the necessary changes to meet ever-changing demands in working with youth" (p. 301).

For years, the Cooperative Extension Service has made the case for research-based programs through its association with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the university land-grant system and county governments. (4-H, a Cooperative Extension program was originally created to serve the needs of youth, eight to 18 years old). Despite this goal, many youth professionals and administrators have argued that this research did not exist.

In 1986 the Executive Director of the National 4-H Council, Don Stormer, reported that the 4-H research base was insufficient (lack of quantity) to ensure the program's "future viability" (p. 16). George McDowell (2001), author of the book *Land-Grant Universities and Extension into the 21st Century*, agreed: "We always knew more about the cows [and cooking] than the kids" (p. 156). As recently as 2011, a team from Seattle Pacific University found that Extension educators did not know where to find the 4-H studies and found it too time consuming to acquire and utilize this research (Bikos, et al.). These perceptions have resulted in such serious consequences, as: a lack of status among other Extension Service programs, development officers refusing to seek funds for the program, and the inability of practitioners and researchers to utilize studies to develop quality programs and support future research.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study were to: 1) locate and document all research studies conducted about the 4-H program and support or dispel the notion about the lack of research; 2) support or dispel McDowell's statement that the majority of 4-H research studies focus on livestock and food preparation; (3) make information about the research studies available to the larger community of youth program practitioners and researchers; and (4) provide a general review of a century of research topics by decade.

Review of Literature

Though 4-H is currently conducted in every state, and in urban as well as rural areas, the foundation of the program was practical education and its application to the vocations of farming and homemaking. 4-H clubs met outside of school, even when their leaders were school superintendents.

There is evidence that the 4-H program was based on educational theory. According to William Beardshear (National Education Association, 1902), president of Iowa State College, the notion of 3 Hs (head, heart and hands) was as significant among educators as the 3Rs: reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. Beardshear explained that the 3Hs were based on the work of Ferdinand Edouard Bussion, a nineteenth century French educator (who later received a Nobel Prize).

O.H. Benson (1915) added the fourth H to satisfy a four-square model of education, but references to the 3Hs continued in literature and were adopted by educational organizations throughout the twentieth century. Notably, Rudyard Kipling (1906) included the 3Hs at the end of his poem about childhood and later, Benjamin Bloom (1956) reissued the 3Hs as educational objectives: cognitive (head), affective (heart), and psychomotor (hands). The 3Hs were also included in school songs (Sutphin and Hillison, 1999).

Few studies compared the goals and operations of early youth groups (Page, 1919). Some of the earliest youth development studies were conducted by G. Stanley Hall of Clark University, who is credited with the term "adolescence." His students made several contributions: Harston (1911) studied the psychology of clubs, Pleasant (1914) investigated organizations for boys, and Swift (1914) wrote *Learning and Doing*, the basis for the 4-H slogan, "Learn by Doing."

The clubs in these early studies might be listed for the reader, except that their programs no longer exist. The first studies of youth service organizations, that included 4-H, Girl and Boy Scouts, and Camp Fire among other national organizations, were published by Page (1919) and the Associated Youth Serving Organizations in 1944.

With 4-H's exceptionally strong connection with land-grant colleges and universities throughout the country, it would seem logical that the research mission of these institutions would reflect the work and study of its youth professionals. Scholl and Munuya (2004) hypothesized that 4-H studies were not well known because their findings were reported in many types of publications: graduate work, government documents, reports of polling organizations, such as Gallup (1979), as well as in peer-reviewed research journals. They also predicted that as technology advanced, it would be possible to locate and document most if not all of this research and determine whether perceptions about any lack of research were justified. Once it was realized that the first known studies were published in 1911, it became a challenge to document and describe the program's century of research studies.

Methods and Findings Related to the Objectives

In many research studies, the methods for each objective are reported together; likewise for the findings. Because methods used in this study vary, the methods and findings for each objective are reported together in order to aid the reader. The limitations, definitions and explanations for this study are included under Objective 1.

Objective 1: To locate and document all research studies conducted about the 4-H program and support or dispel the notion about the lack of research.

Objective 1: Methods

In order to find and document the 4-H research studies it was important to develop a plan. Most of the studies were located by five different means:

- 1) review materials in the stacks (in this case the restricted areas of the library where documents are stored) and card catalogs of the National Agricultural Library and the National Archives (Archives II, College Park, MD),
- 2) review department libraries at eight institutions which do not catalog master's degree studies in their university libraries,
- 3) conduct an initial call for research studies among the state leaders of the 4-H program and send monthly listserv e-mails to 4-H youth professionals with the assistance of the National 4-H Headquarters,
- 4) scan library and Internet web-sites to find other sources, and
- 5) review reference lists in order to find additional studies.

USAIN (U.S. Agricultural Information Network) and Canadian librarians were also contacted to locate U.S. and international library holdings. Special collections in library archives throughout the country were also studied.

When there were questions about the study's relevance to the 4-H program, a copy was borrowed or purchased and then reviewed. In some cases, it was also necessary to contact the registrar of a college or university to obtain additional information.

Information about the studies was placed and sorted on two databases, one for graduate student studies and another for state, national and government (professional) studies. This information included: author, title, college or university, type of publication, date of publication

or graduation, degree (if any), and the abstract. A Filemaker Pro [™] (1994) software was used to store and sort studies as they were found.

Limitations, Definitions and Explanations

- The main purpose of this study was to locate and document 4-H research studies completed between 1911 and 2010. Though some professionals refer to a research base as a “research methods base” that has been mined for research methods, theory and/or findings, for the purpose of this study, a research base was defined as the body of research conducted about the 4-H program. No attempt was made to determine the quality of each study. Reviewers looked at the methodology, but it wasn’t possible to generalize except to say the authors of these studies used and modified a variety of models, theories, and descriptive, co-relational and quasi-experimental methods in order to reach their objectives. It was felt it would be a greater contribution to provide the research study data on-line and allow youth practitioners and researchers to make their own determinations as to the value of the research methods. (See Objective 3.)
- Some may question why graduate studies were investigated. It was known before the study started that many of these student researchers were 4-H youth professionals with aspirations to further their programs and make a contribution to the larger organization. Many of these student researchers became state and national 4-H leaders. More than a few of these studies led to additional investigations and program innovation during their careers.
- While it is entirely possible that not all of the 4-H studies were found, thirteen years (1998 through the first half of 2011) were actively dedicated to this effort.

Objective 1: Findings

The location of 4-H studies was difficult. “4-H” and “4H” appeared as part of dozens of chemical compounds frequently studied by scientists in a variety of fields. The “4-H” found in a title or abstract may have been written as “4-H” or “Four-H” with or without a hyphen. In the early years, the program was known as boys and girls clubs, 3-H, junior clubs and even industrial clubs. Depending on the country, the 4-H program was recognized as: 4-A, 4-B, 4-C, 5-C, 4-K, 4-S, or 4-T or a title in any number of languages. In addition, many of the colleges represented by the studies became universities and several experienced dramatic name changes: Glassboro College to Rowan University, for example.

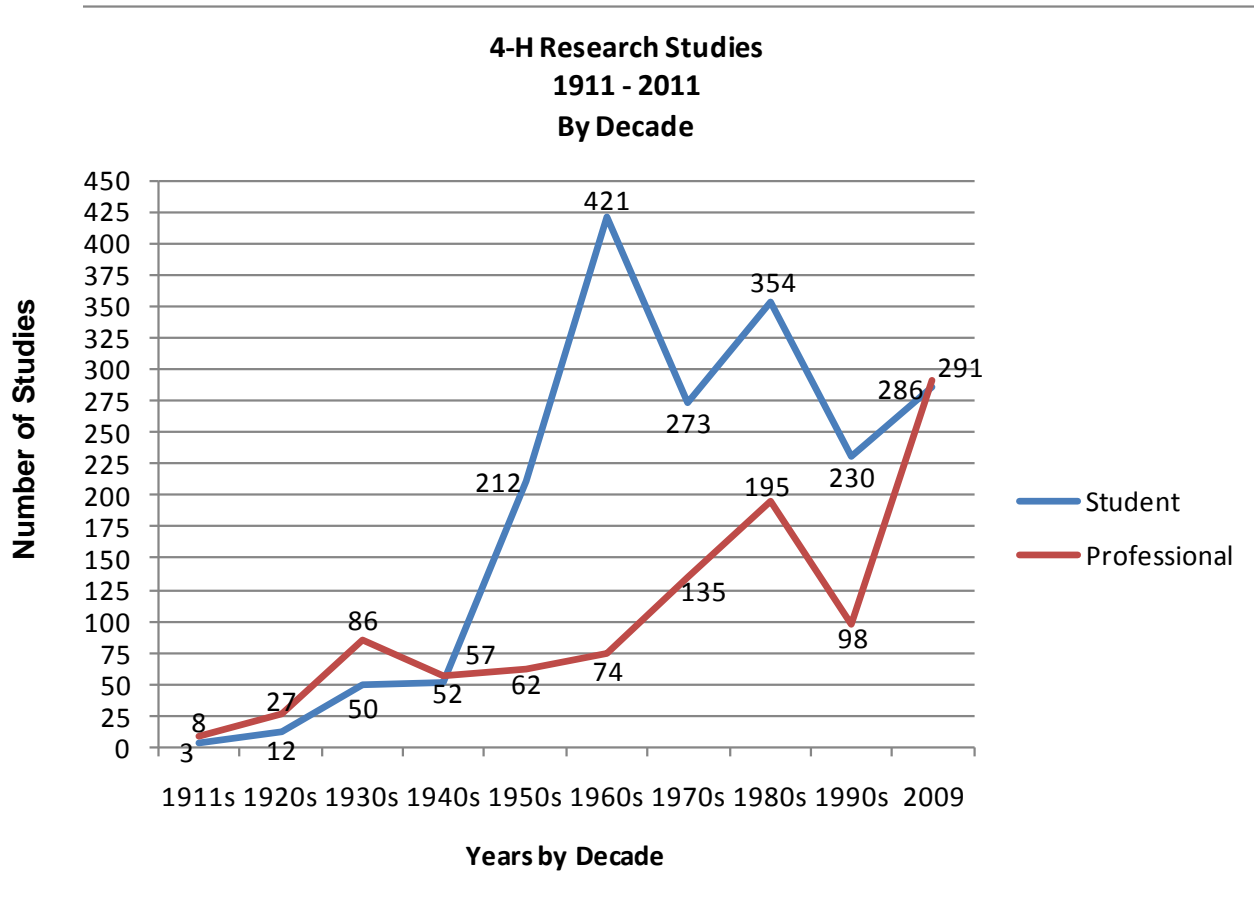
The location, coding and sorting of studies as indicated in the methods section for Objective 1 yielded the following information:

- Over 3550 (3556) studies were found representing the years 1911 through 2010.
- 2251 were graduate student studies and 1305 professional studies, roughly a two-to-one ratio. During World War II and the decade of the 2000s, the numbers of graduate and professional studies were nearly the same.
- Of the graduate studies, nearly 75% were conducted by students completing a master’s degree and 25% were those completing doctorates, including Ph.D. and Ed.D. degrees. Bachelor’s degree, certificate, diploma and license-related studies were reviewed, but these represented less than one percent of the studies.
- Graduate Studies represented 150 colleges across the U.S., Canada and a handful of countries and territories. Most of the studies originated from land-grant institutions, but there were also studies from: Harvard, the University of Chicago and lesser known

institutions, such as the Stonier Graduate School of Banking and the National Catholic School of Social Sciences.

- Graduate Studies: These studies represented a wide variety of academic departments, including: Economics, English, Law, and Recreation, for example, as well as Education, Agriculture and Home Economics/Family and Consumer Sciences.
- Graduate Studies: Those institutions graduating the most students at all locations were: the University of Wisconsin (160 studies), Ohio State University (153 studies), the University of Maryland (115 studies) and Penn State University (94 studies). In the South, Louisiana State University (94 studies) and the University of Tennessee (89 studies) matriculated by far the largest number. Fifty institutions produced just one study.
- Professional Studies: The professional studies (including state, national and government studies) represented institutions similar to those listed above. In addition, at least ten percent were studies published by the: USDA, National 4-H Council, Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP), and colleges and universities in the Washington, D.C. area: American University, George Washington University and Federal City College. Twenty percent were multi-state and regional studies.
- Professional Studies: Independent studies were conducted by Abt Associate (Shapiro, 1974), the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (Hoyt, 1978), the Science and Education Administration (Scriven, 1979), the Gallup Organization (1979), the Social Research Group (Dennis & Hurt, 1979), Nike Whitcome Associates (Chicago, 1989), and the Human Interaction Research Institute (Backer & Kunz, 2002).
- International Studies: Though 4-H began in the U.S., it is an international organization. Studies were found from: Canada, Greece, Guatemala, Iran and the West Indies.
- All studies: Thirty-six studies were specifically identified with both 4-H and FFA (Future Farmers of America). Two studies described or compared 4-H with FHA (Future Homemakers of America now called, Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA); two studies with Camp Fire youth. Six studies related to scouting. Most of these studies addressed community aspects of youth organizations and focused on joint efforts to prevent juvenile delinquency.
- The distribution of all of the studies found are reported by decade in the following chart: graduate student and professional studies are plotted separately.

Figure 1



The chart in Figure 1 shows a surge in graduate studies in the 1960s, perhaps because the Payne/4-H Fellowships Fund (Copeland & McAuliffe, 2008), continued to increase the number of graduate study scholarships given until 1969. The quantity of graduate and professional studies was approximately the same during World War II and in the 2000s when more studies were published in refereed journals. The main increases in professional studies in the 2000s occurred during 2005 and 2007.

The research team determined from these findings that there was a large body of research studies created by both graduate students and professionals to provide a basis for further documentation and study. Though no specific research agenda was found in this literature, it is interesting to note that, starting in 1952, at least twenty studies were completed every year.

Objective 2: To support or dispel McDowell's statement that the majority of 4-H research studies focused on livestock or cooking.

Objective 2: Methods

A qualitative research approach was applied in the analysis of the content of the 3556 studies to address McDowell's statement. The procedures used were based on Berg (2004), Berg and Latin (2004), and the criteria for analyzing documents, provided by Creswell (2009, p. 180).

In many qualitative studies, the focus is on identifying themes and gaining insight in order to make decisions or establish policy. The data set is studied until content themes begin to repeat themselves.

In this study, content analysis was used rather than establishing statistical significance or extrapolating findings from a random sample to larger populations (both typical in quantitative studies). The research team applied this technique and reviewed the content in all of the studies.

As recommended by Gibbs (2007), independent coders entered and made comparisons in order to improve the validity and reliability of the data and the findings. The databases allowed topics to be sorted and studied by content and keyword search. A cross-tabulation analysis was also employed where two or more topics, related to a theme or research question, were addressed within a single study.

Objective 2: Findings

Less than 1% of the 3556 studies referred to any type of livestock, cooking, or foods and nutrition project. In fact, less than five percent of the studies could be connected to any type of 4-H project. Though the reviewers utilized online as well as hand-sorting methods, it was extremely difficult to quantify the research topics as the individual studies often addressed five or more factors.

The reviewers sorted the remaining studies into 32 categories (33 if curriculum is counted) not so much for the purpose of generalizing the studies or indicating their importance, but to create a thesaurus with keywords so others could locate the research studies on-line. (See Objective 3.) The alphabetical listing of the main category headings were: 1) adults (volunteers, alumni, mentors), 2) agents (4-H educators), 3) careers (4-H participant related), 4) children, 5) community, 6) competition, 7) conferences, 8) cooperation among agencies, 9) cooperation among extension employees, 10) curriculum, 11) disadvantaged youth (low income, children of offenders, vulnerable youth), 12) diversity (including disability), 13) economics (organizational), 14) educational concepts, 15) events and fairs, 16) history, 17) home demonstration clubs, 18) international/cultural, 19) leaders and leadership, 20) meetings (types), 21) new audiences, 22) older youth (teens and those older than eighteen), 23) organizational policies, 24) promotion, 25) public speaking, 26) school and after school programs, 27) research methods, 28) science, 29) tenure and enrollment, 30) technology and media, 31) values, and 32) youth input. An additional category was added and called "comparisons," which included studies that paired perceptions of adults vs. youth, administrators vs. practitioners, legislators vs. administrations, etc.

Objective 3: Make information about the research studies available to the larger community of youth program practitioners and researchers.

Objective 3: Methods

In 2007, the studies on the Filemaker Pro [™] (1994) software were transferred onto an Internet web-site by the Penn State University (Paterno) Library and AgNIC (Agriculture Network Information Center) to make the research information available to the public. The Internet site was designed so that new studies could be continuously added and users could locate studies by author, title, date or keyword. One database housed the graduate studies; another, the professional studies. An option was designed to allow users to sort their list of studies into an alphabetical bibliography. A web-site "counter" was created so that the location and type of

users could be noted. A “contact us” feature was established so users could ask questions and receive assistance.

Objective 3: Findings

The web-site was developed in 2007 and revised (in 2009 and 2011) by an outside consultant and a team of information technology experts at the Penn State University (Paterno) and the National Agricultural Libraries in 2010-2011. The counter feature indicated users represented the fifty states and Canada and those that accessed the site, included: researchers (both professional and graduate students), youth professionals (in 4-H and other groups), administrators of Extension and other programs, legislators, parents and the youth. The URLs to find the 4-H research databases changed several times during the process of completion and, regulated by the library systems, became complex. A printed bookmark, with the URL: <http://apps.libraries.psu.edu/agnic>, was widely distributed at conferences and 4-H leader forums. Many other users found their way to the site by entering “4-H research” in a search engine browser.

Objective 4: To provide a general review of a century of research topics by decade

Objective 4: Methods

The research team determined the following review of research topics and trends using the methods outlined for Objective 2, including an online keyword search and hand sort of studies. A few representative studies for each decade were determined and included within the text to give the readers concrete examples.

Objective 4: Findings

1910s.

The first studies were published in 1911 by Harston, who described boys and girls clubs (what 4-H programs were called in the early years), and Jessie Field Shambaugh (1911) who conducted agricultural experiments with 3-H youngsters in her school district. Pauline Raven (1913), Montana State College (1914) and later, Shinn (1928) looked at the Extension programs which resulted from early 4-H work and their value to home and farm life. Danzinger (1918) investigated and made recommendations for fair exhibits at the county, state and regional levels.

1920s.

Throughout the century, there were a surprisingly few studies on the value of giving demonstrations and public speaking. During the early years, demonstrations referred to the progress young people made in a project, such as a test plot or a home or garden improvement. They were rarely “how-to” presentations given in front of group.

In 1924, the first camping study was conducted by the Eastern States Exposition at Camp Vail in Massachusetts. Leadership and character building were first studied in 1926. (Studies relating to the development of leadership appeared almost every year between 1926 and 2010.)

The national club camp was evaluated by USDA in 1927 and, during this landmark event, the 4-H pledge was determined and a formal 4-H uniform was required though the young people lived and slept in tents on the Capital Mall in Washington, DC.

By the end of the 1920s, project requirements were investigated by Reese (1929) and his team. Wiley (1928) and Wenzel (1930) studied the value of socialization within clubs.

1930s.

By 1931, former members were surveyed, by Grady, and a "future outlook" projected. Researchers began to look at the length of 4-H membership and determine why members did or did not reenroll.

In the early 1930s, youth income, educational values and college aspirations were prominent topics. Attendance at college was emphasized and young people earned funds by raising cattle and canning foods. Cooperative Houses on campuses kept their expenses low (Smith, 1941). Part of this may have been an attempt to support the values of farm life (as so many were leaving the farms to live in the city) by providing educational and social activities. In any case, these programs were prominent through the 1960s. The Extension Service was also concerned about non-college bound youth between 18 and 21 years of age (Barnard & Crile, 1940).

1940s.

In the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, enrollment studies were evident. Researchers were interested in what could be done to market 4-H and keep members enrolled, especially after their first year of enrollment and during their teen years. Programs for Black youth were now being developed and studied. This was the first time record books were looked at in any analytical way (Palmer, 1940). Between 1941 and 1942, Frutchey and eight other collaborators published a half dozen "educational growth studies" in 4-H food preservation, clothing, dairy, cotton, and sheep, starting with vegetable gardening (1941). In 1942, Peroutky studied livestock evaluation using a "systems approach." The forties was also a time when the needs of youth were reviewed both during and after World War II. Junior leadership programs were also coming into their own.

1950s.

In the 1950s, ways were being developed to determine how 4-H professionals spent their time. Increasing the effectiveness of 4-H in-services and leadership programs, project completions, judging and award systems were efforts to prevent loss of membership and bolster motivation and personal development.

The impact of television and data from the International Farm Youth Exchanges (exchanges to other countries) were analyzed in 1954-56. Programs for low socioeconomic, disadvantaged, and non-farm families were considered in order to meet the needs of these youth.

News stories, bulletins and circular letters were also analyzed and two studies inquired whether certain types of illustrations could improve project books (Wilkening, Clark & Landry, 1956; Taylor, 1960).

In the 1950s and 1960s, researchers tried to determine whether 4-H made a difference in the personal/social development and academic achievement of youth or if too much time was being spent away from school and other activities. Citizenship activities were piloted in five states in 1962 and the National 4-H Club Foundation (1963) proposed expanding the curricula to include science, a topic which up to that time was taught only in school.

1960s.

First year club leaders were targeted in 1963 and 1964 in order to help them improve their experiences and the viability of their clubs. In 1964, urban areas were studied and youth became involved in 4-H Peace Corps projects (Schmidt). One study determined that the

continuance factor in volunteer leadership was not necessarily an organizational issue but largely a matter of personal orientation (Brog & Couch, 1965).

Photography, clothing selection and home furnishing projects were studied in the latter part of the 1960s. Innovative programs and educational games were evaluated. There was a renewed interest in leadership programs and in successful club meetings.

1970s.

By the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, studies of low-income volunteers, minorities, and urban and inner-city programs were prominent. Critical components of the 4-H professional's job, use of volunteers and newly hired paraprofessionals, and staffing models were analyzed. Educational club programs on television were investigated, especially the Mulligan Stew series (Shapiro, 1974) designed to teach nutrition concepts. Cooperative Extension was becoming more and more aware of children's food choices and the Expanded Foods and Nutrition Program (EFNEP) was established to address (and still addresses) the needs of low-income youth and adults. 4-H foundations were first studied in the 1960s and 1970s to help secure funds for expanding programs.

In 1975, programs for disabled or underserved youth were reviewed in an effort to be more inclusive. Awards as incentives were studied. Internships and fellowships became more prominent and the curriculum development focus was more practical. In 1978, intergenerational projects came into vogue and were studied by Minnich. Audio cassettes were the latest in educational technology (Mortvedt & Fain, 1978). The relationship of 4-H and the schools was renewed and there were a few studies on what youth gained from animal/livestock programs.

The national Citizenship Washington Focus (conference) participants were surveyed by Johnson (1979) as the old Citizenship Short Course was being revamped. Researchers looked at: middle management, economics, developmental and interactional theories, future trends, and consequences of negative social behaviors.

1980s.

In 1980, there was a historical bent to the research: a longitudinal look at youth programs between 1948 and 1980 and studies about national camps and conferences over 50 years. Teen friendship patterns (Beasley, Conner & Ostrander, 1980) were examined with implications for recruitment and programming in the 4-H program.

Partnerships with the American Red Cross, the Defense Department and other groups were reviewed as well as the 4-H professional association, NAE4-HA. Complex financial and public relationships of Extension Service were in question as well as 4-H's impact on groups such as the Extension homemakers, livestock producers and 4-H alumni. Time and money spent by adult volunteer leaders were also studied.

Teen alcohol use, family strengths, and psychosocial maturity were prominent issues among 4-H and non-4-H youth in 1981. The awards system, including an evaluation of the national awards system, was reviewed. In 1983, USDA published an analysis and recommendations of a national 4-H needs assessment. Computer projects for youth were pilot tested (by Maurer) in 1984.

Criteria and quality indicators for relevant 4-H curriculum development were developed, and some career development strategies addressed (Hoyt, 1978). Leadership styles and life skills were coming to the forefront and 4-H was concerned with strengthening the research base for Extension programs. A national research taxonomy, PRK (Professional Research and Knowledge) was established (Lifer & Gerhard, 1987). In the late 1980s, there was a resurgence of studies related to: curriculum, science, school programs, dropouts, volunteers and staffing models, awards and benefits to alumni. Barber (1988) also studied the ethical dilemmas 4-H professionals encountered in their work.

1990s.

Barriers to “youth-at-risk” programs were an issue in the 1990s. More focus was given to the job satisfaction of 4-H professionals and improvements in their family life. Factors related to curriculum, international work, strengthening youth-serving and community organizations, youth with disabilities, and fair exhibits were by far the most studied topics during this time period.

Parents were surveyed giving their perceptions of the value of the 4-H program. Mentoring, learning styles, life skills, workforce education (occupational analysis), and sportsmanship studies were prominent. Community Service became “service learning” and articles on diversity education were published. The tenure status of volunteers and faculty was studied. The practical applications of technology were investigated in order to solve organizational problems, such as: answering questions about 4-H events and developing curriculum. This continued in the 2000s, as retinal imaging was used to identify project animals (Rusk, et al., 2006; Howell, et al., 2008).

In the late 1990s and 2000, teens were utilized in team teaching and as cooperating researchers. The educational value of 4-H activities was reviewed. Several theoretical models were proposed. Life skill and core competency studies focused on what youth gained from both the project and the interactive experiences. Alcohol and drug education, civic engagement and camping studies remained strong.

2000s.

In the 2000s, the research studies were as diverse as ever. In 2002, the Story of 4-H’s National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century was published (Backer & Kunz) and perceptions held by legislators were analyzed (Hodson, & Kotrlik, 2002). Environmental literacy and after-school programs were now being conducted; preferred forms of recognition and motivations reviewed. Though some researchers felt that 4-H should move away from record book requirements; other studies emphasized their value.

In 2005, the first public speaking study appeared (Donaldson et. al) and the first 4-H study addressing a science program was targeted to girls (Speigel et al.). In 2006, 2007, and 2008, robotics was evaluated as a project option. In 2009 and 2010, social networking was considered as a marketing and program enhancer. Programs for military youth were created and investigated in the late 2000s.

Conclusions and Implications

The primary objectives of this study were to: locate and document all existing research studies conducted about the 4-H program, to support or dispel notions about the lack of research and its focus on livestock and cooking. Other related goals were to make information about the

research studies available to the larger community of youth program practitioners and researchers, and finally, to provide a general review of research topics by decade.

A large body of research about the 4-H program was found. Only a few studies related to livestock, cooking or 4-H projects in general. Technology aided greatly in the location of studies, the analysis, and making the information directly available to users. As information about newly published 4-H studies is continuously added to the databases and made available to youth professionals and researchers, the forecast for future study is bright.

In 2011, Bialeschki and Conn recognized the authors of this paper as representing one of the few youth serving organization that attempted to locate all of their research studies in a format that may be studied. While it was not within this study's scope to support or refute this, the study does provide a model to find research published in a variety of documents, not only for the purpose of creating reviews of literature, but to document a body of research conducted over a long period of time. Once this is done, it becomes possible to establish an agenda with objectives that can be communicated to encourage future research, document issues, provide potential solutions to problems, and acquire the resources needed to continue and improve youth development efforts. Longitudinal studies can be proposed. Studies of critical need can be conducted on a regular basis and their results compared from year to year or decade to decade. Studies can be built on exploratory efforts and replicated in many places. Funding agencies, legislators, administrators and youth practitioners can obtain the information they need to make decisions that benefit program planning and implementation.

In terms of future research, some may wish to investigate one or more of the thirty-three categories of research themes found in this study. Likely these categories will be of interest to other youth-serving organizations with similar concerns and research agendas. Another major contribution might be to document the overall value of the 4-H program as nearly every study addressed this issue in some way.

Though there may be many additional studies conducted and further research collaborations established, at the beginning of this study few, if any, practitioners and administrators could even imagine that 4-H research studies had been conducted for 100 years. If nothing else has been accomplished, at least the youth practitioners in this organization will now know that a large body of study supports their efforts.

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From Then to Now: Emerging Directions for Youth Program Evaluation

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Abstract: Understanding the impact of youth development programs has been an important topic since the programs first began, and the past 25 years in particular have witnessed considerable advances in the evaluation of youth development programs. This article presents a brief history of youth development program evaluation, considering how it has changed over the years. From there, three contemporary trends related to youth program evaluation are examined: 1) a new evaluation focus, which is the emphasis on evaluating program quality; 2) organizational structures related to effective program evaluation, primarily in the area of program evaluability and evaluation capacity building; and 3) an emerging evaluation approach, involving youth in evaluating the programs that affect them. The article concludes with a call for programs to attend carefully to program implementation quality.

Introduction

Understanding the impact of youth development programs has been an important topic since the programs first began. The past 25 years in particular have witnessed considerable advances in the evaluation of youth development programs and what defines a “successful” program. The movement of evaluation from narrative accounts of program success, to counts of program participants and measures of participant satisfaction, to measures of program outcomes has taken place relatively quickly, dropping us firmly at the doorstep of the “gold standard” of program evaluation: evaluations that utilize a rigorous experimental design.

The importance of measuring program outcomes notwithstanding, recent developments in the field of youth program evaluation are setting the stage for broader, more inclusive, evaluation

strategies; strategies that emphasize evaluation use and organizational learning, both of which have been highlighted as important if evaluations are to have impact on stakeholder support, program improvement, and decision making (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011).

In this article we will present a brief history of youth development program evaluation, and consider how it has changed over the years, exploring the developments that led to an emphasis on measuring program outcomes. As we shall see, however, not every youth development program is a good candidate for outcomes evaluation, and many youth organizations lack the resources needed to conduct rigorous outcomes evaluation. In addition, recent developments in the youth program evaluation have invited a broader understanding of the evaluative needs of youth programs. As such, the remainder of this article will consider three contemporary trends related to youth program evaluation. First we will consider a new evaluation *focus*, which is the emphasis on evaluating program quality. Second we will consider *organizational structures* related to effective program evaluation, primarily in the areas of ability of a program to be evaluated and evaluation capacity building. Finally, we will discuss the emergence of a new evaluation *approach*, involving youth in evaluating the programs that affect them.

A Brief History of Youth Program Evaluation

Publications related to youth program evaluations have flourished in the past 10 years. Where once a dearth of literature existed, today an abundance of information related to the effectiveness of youth development programs can be found. Just over 20 years ago little evaluative information on youth programs existed. Indeed, the field of program evaluation as a whole is a relatively young field of study, only now approaching the 40-year mark. Program evaluation began in the US in the early 1960s, when the first federally mandated (and funded) program evaluations got underway. The programs that underwent these early evaluations were implemented as part of the War on Poverty in the United States. Evaluators, who were largely contracted university researchers, were excited to lend their expertise to measure the effectiveness of social programs, and policy makers looked forward to programming decisions that would be based on sound evidence of a program's success. In her commentary on the impact of program evaluation during its first 25 years, Weiss (1987) reveals a rather dismal picture of the results of these early evaluations: the evaluation results did not support evidence of program success. Despite the resulting evidence, people appeared to *believe* in programs and evaluation data had little effect on program expansions or reductions. One reason for this was the recognition that social issues are complex, and the outcomes initially identified for the new Federal programs may not have been reasonable indicators of success. As Weiss (1987) points out, the yardstick used to measure success almost guaranteed failure.

Nonetheless, the results of these early evaluation efforts received important methodological critiques that began the conversation about effective and valid program evaluation; a conversation that remains strong today. First was a focus on rigor, particularly in response to the use of comparison groups rather than true experimental designs with randomly assigned control groups (Bernstein, 1975). Design critics raised the point that no evaluation can reveal valid results without a rigorous design, and attention to this would result in better evidence of program effectiveness. On the other side were those who argued the use of qualitative methods that allowed reflexive awareness and response to the "human" side of social programs, focusing on the impact of programs from the viewpoint of the program participants. This approach was deemed more useful than trying to prove outcomes that were determined a priori; outcomes

that may not even be the most meaningful outcomes to measure (Patton, 1980). And somewhere in between was the growing recognition that social programs asked a lot of people, in that participants were expected to change from their pre-intervention state to an ideal state in one step (Weiss, 1987). This expectation meant that the many important, and often critical, intermediate indicators of progress were not articulated, let alone captured as indicators of success. Nor were the human participants of programs viewed as works in progress, growing and changing in, and influenced by, the context of their lives.

Similar critiques of program evaluations are still present today; we are far from resolution. And while issues of design rigor and methodological approach remain important, the natural *developmental* influences that are at play throughout the time a youth might participate in a program complexify our ability to determine precise program factors that create success. These realities underscore the need to consider youth program evaluation a complex task, and draw into question evaluation yardsticks that do not fully consider the social and developmental contexts of youth programs.

Youth Development Program Evaluation

Youth development programs in the US began to emerge in the late 1800s and early part of the 20th century. From providing boys who “roamed the streets” of Hartford, CT in 1860 with positive alternatives (Boys & Girls Club, 2011), to helping girls become “capable and creative women” in 1910 (Camp Fire USA, 2011), to teaching rural youth about advances in agriculture through “hands-on” learning in 1902 (National 4-H Council, 2011), these early programs reflected society’s sense of social obligation to attend to the welfare and development of youth. Even in the early years, there was interest in understanding and sharing the impact of programs on youth, which often was in the form of testimonials and case studies of program participants who excelled as a result of the program.

Success stories provided heart-warming support for society’s efforts to support youth, and programs flourished in many cases because they were seen *as the right thing to do*. But changes to the economy and emerging differences in opinion about the role of society in helping youth in the 1980s ushered in a new day for youth program evaluation. As the age of accountability dawned, pressure to determine more definitively the value and impact of youth programs increased.

The formal and systematic evaluation of youth development programs did not begin until the late 1980s, when the idea of youth development as a separate program from intervention programs began to take hold. In 1989 the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development identified five goals of successful adolescent development:

- 1) intellectually reflective;
- 2) enroute to a life of meaningful work;
- 3) good citizens;
- 4) caring and ethical; and
- 5) healthy.

While the goals were clear, clarity on what constituted a youth development program remained uncertain. Evaluations of youth programs began to take place nonetheless, with the first systematic efforts measuring program “reach,” which defined success by the number of

participants in a program, and thus “proved” to funders and other stakeholders that program services were provided (Rennekamp & Engle, 2008). Measures of program reach were followed by measures of participant satisfaction, assuming that if participants were satisfied with the program, funders would be more likely to continue funding (Rennekamp & Engle, 2008). Such indicators of success, however, did not provide evidence of program effectiveness, and it was not long before accountability expectations shifted to an emphasis on demonstrating lasting impact on program participants.

In a subsequent report, the Carnegie Council (1992) identified two sets of concerns problematic to youth development program evaluation:

- 1) lack of expertise and/or support for program evaluation, which presented an early call for evaluation capacity building; and
- 2) limitations on researchers’ current approaches to evaluation, which set the stage for the development of innovative evaluation techniques.

Additional concerns were related to the lack of funding and staff allocated to outcome evaluations, even among the nation’s oldest and largest youth organizations. Also of concern were evaluation designs that lacked rigor, which led to unsubstantiated claims of program success. As a result, the Carnegie Council also highlighted a need to bridge the gap between evaluators and practitioners, and perhaps most importantly, to develop consensus on what outcomes should be used to evaluate youth development programs.

In an effort to update and expand the 1992 Carnegie Council report, Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray and Foster (1998) attempted to synthesize youth development program evaluation. The authors searched the most relevant databases with a narrowed focus on youth development program evaluations, leaving out school-based and curricular-based programs that did not take a comprehensive youth development approach. There was such variation among the programs and the information that was provided in the evaluation that a formal meta-analysis was not possible. In the end, 15 program evaluations that had an experimental (9) or comparison group design (6) were chosen for examination.

The authors conclude that, except for a few instances, little improvement to the state of youth program evaluation development had occurred since the 1992 Carnegie Report. They conclude that the lack of quality evaluations could be related to the newness of the youth development framework and if true, then improvement should occur and be evidenced by increased literature related to youth program evaluation. This early paucity of rigorous program evaluations is important to note, as it sets a baseline for understanding the development of youth program evaluation in the subsequent 13 years.

Despite the early lack of high quality program evaluations, indicators of success for the youth development framework were beginning to emerge. The strongest themes for these indicators were:

- 1) the presence of adults who fostered skill, community building and hope for youth;
- 2) youth who were seen as resources to be developed rather than problems to be fixed; and
- 3) programs that created spaces of belonging where youth feel safe, cared for, and empowered.

The particular activities of the programs were not as important as the program's ability to create an atmosphere for active participation and opportunities for challenge and growth.

By the early part of this century a better articulation on youth program structure and outcomes developed. As part of this, Eccles and Gootman (2002) concluded that all youth programs should undergo evaluation, but the goals, and thus the design, for evaluation will differ from program to program. The authors concur that very few high-quality experimental program evaluations had been conducted to determine the impact of programs on youth. While they cite many possible reasons for this, the primary factor is that such evaluations take time, money and knowledge resources, things that most youth serving organizations do not have. The authors acknowledge that comprehensive experimental designs are still critically important, but such designs need to be coupled with evaluations of program implementation in order to understand better the factors behind the effects found through experimental designs. Furthermore, only programs that meet certain criteria should even consider experimental designs. These criteria include evaluating only program components that are common to many youth programs and limiting such evaluations to established national organizations with local affiliates. Although non-experimental designs reveal little about program effect, they are useful for assessing program implementation and identifying patterns of effective practice. According to Eccles and Gootman (2002) candidates for non-experimental designs include programs that are quite broad, relatively immature, when the goal of the evaluation is to assess fidelity and program implementation, or when the program staff is responsible for conducting the evaluation.

Emerging Trends in Youth Development Program Evaluation

The importance of comprehensive, rigorous, experimental studies notwithstanding, many youth serving programs lack the resources to conduct comprehensive studies and even if they could, they may not provide the most useful information to the program. Recently, three important trends in youth development programming have begun to emerge that help broaden the way we think about youth program evaluation methods and use. The first, which represents a change in evaluation *focus*, involves an emphasis on evaluating program quality. The second underscores the importance of *organizational* support for evaluation through evaluation capacity building. And the third reflects a shift in evaluation *approach* by involving youth in evaluating the programs that serve them.

Measuring Program Quality as a Critical Factor in Youth Program Evaluation

Recently, researchers and program evaluators alike began to question why some programs were achieving targeted outcomes while others were not. Momentum built around discovering the reason for the lack of consistency in achieving youth-level outcomes, and the phrase *program quality* began to emerge. Early definitions of program quality had a global focus on attaining high standards of practice and achieving targeted outcomes (Pittman, Tolman, & Yohalem, 2005). With the entrance of the National Research Council's (Eccles & Gootman, 2002) eight features of positive developmental settings, interest at all levels of practice, research, and policy swung toward describing what was happening within programs as a way of adding explanatory power to the achievement, or lack thereof, of targeted youth outcomes. This list of program features built upon the themes emerging from developmental theory, empirical research in educational and family settings, and early youth program evaluations.

The race to "scale up" program implementation led some researchers to investigate more closely the association between program implementation and youth outcomes. It became

increasingly apparent that the transition from a carefully controlled research study to a practical, real-world youth program resulted in a breakdown of the quality of program delivery (Gerstenblith, et al., 2005). Many programs were sacrificing key elements related to staffing patterns and program features that promoted youth engagement in their quest to offer services to a larger audience.

With evidence of the link between program quality and youth outcomes mounting, attention turned to considering which specific program features were most important in achieving outcomes. Building from Eccles and Gootman's (2002) features of positive developmental settings, many programs developed their own list of high quality program content, structures, and processes. Program practices that have been almost universally adopted include creating spaces of physical and psychological safety, building supportive relationships, delivering effective programming, and providing opportunities for youth engagement (Granger, Durlak, Yohalem, & Reisner, 2007; Grossman, Goldsmith, Sheldon, & Arbretton, 2009; Hirsch, Mekinda, & Stawicki, 2010; National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2000; Siaca, 2010). A less commonly selected program characteristic was cultural sensitivity. Yet emerging evidence supports the significance of this program feature in the achievement of youth outcomes in programs with diverse audiences (Pierce, Bolt, & Vandell, 2010; Riggs, Bohnert, Guzman, & Davidson, 2010). As support for the focus on program practices and quality has grown, the definition of program quality has drifted away from quality as a global concept and instead has concentrated on quality at the point of service with convergence around the importance of the interaction between program content, staff practices and youth experiences (Hirsch et al., 2010; Smith, Peck, Denault, Blazeovski, & Akiva, 2010; Yohalem, Granger, & Pittman, 2009).

The interest in evaluating program quality has expanded quite rapidly over the last 12 years. We have progressed through stages of simply understanding what was meant by program quality, questioning why it was important, and determining how to measure it, to considering the obligation of accountability for both program quality and youth outcomes (Yohalem, Granger, & Pittman, 2009). As the program quality movement has grown, the question of minimum levels of quality and program improvement has developed simultaneously. The idea that "programs are only as good as their implementation" (Hirsch, et al., 2010, p. 450) points to a need to adhere to the evidence-based program delivery protocol and alludes to the two entry points for evaluation in the program delivery process. First, as youth programs shift from a research environment to a practical program, it is common for staff to make adjustments in program delivery. These implementation changes may be simple scheduling alterations that have little impact on program quality and youth outcomes or modifications such as reducing the number of staff members that may significantly affect the program's ability to achieve quality standards. Implementation evaluation monitors the fidelity of program delivery and is used in conjunction with short-term youth outcome data to determine if program changes are negatively affecting youth outcomes. Second, as programs age and staffs change, evaluation of both program delivery and the quality of that delivery become critical to the successful maturing of the program.

As policymaker and funder interest in program quality increases, the pressure on programs to respond will also increase. Youth development programs may begin to position themselves for this increased accountability by creating systems that track both point of service quality and youth outcomes (Granger, Durlak, Yohalem, & Reisner, 2007) and the relationship between the two. Practitioners and researchers alike are cognizant that the youth development field could quickly follow the path of the education (teaching to the test) and prevention (serving less needy youth) fields if expectations become too stringent (Yohalem, Granger, & Pittman, 2009).

The lessons learned from our counterparts' experiences serve as a valuable foreshadowing of the challenges the youth development field may face if the accountability expectations are set too high. Eccles and Gootman (2002) bring focus to the accountability discussion through their entreaty to shape the scope and rigor of evaluations to the goals and resources of individual programs. This serves as a reminder that not every program can or should be evaluated.

Evaluation Capacity Building through Youth Participatory Evaluation

The field of program evaluation has grown exponentially in the past 40 years. So much so, that Hallie Preskill, in her 2007 presidential address to the American Evaluation Association, claimed that the field of evaluation had arrived at a "Tipping Point", a *liminal* place where something wholly new was about to emerge (Preskill, 2008). Referring to what she termed "evaluation's second act," Preskill emphasized the critical importance of building evaluation capacity of people and their organizations to create cultures of evaluation to think evaluatively, engage in evaluation practice, and use evaluation findings. The movement toward evaluation capacity within organizations is especially important to explore in the field of youth development, particularly given the fact that so many youth programs do not meet the criteria for comprehensive experimental evaluations outlined by Eccles and Gootman (2002). Many youth organizations are struggling to find ways to develop internal evaluation capacity, often because of the expectations of external funders, both large and small, but also because the organizations *want* to know about the impact of their programs on the youth they serve.

Evaluation capacity building (ECB) is defined as an *intentional* process to create and sustain an organizational culture that routinely conducts evaluations and uses the evaluation results (Comptom, Bazierman, & Stockdill, 2002). One of the most important aspects of ECB is the emphasis on organizational learning and development, as it is now understood that building individual evaluation capacity alone will not do enough to create quality evaluation practice in organizations (Preskill & Boyle, 2008). As Taylor-Powell and Boyd (2008) point out, ECB can be messy business, especially in complex organizations. Building evaluation capacity and doing evaluations are not the same thing and the two roles are often confused, especially when organizational understanding of, and support for, evaluation is lagging.

Taylor-Powell and Boyd (2008) outline a three-part framework for ECB that includes 1) professional development; 2) resources and support; and 3) organizational environment. This framework is useful for understanding that professional development (i. e. individual capacity) alone is not enough. Careful attention must be paid to the resources and organizational culture if evaluation capacity is to be developed and sustained. As more and more youth organizations seek to build evaluation capacity, certain important and interesting elements are emerging. In particular we focus on the need for providing "just in time" evaluation training for youth organizations, and the practice of involving youth in the evaluation of the programs that serve them.

When applying ECB efforts to youth serving organizations, one of the first complications that arises is the need to build capacity *and* conduct evaluations at the same time. Unlike other professional development opportunities that typically build on a previously established professional foundation, many professionals in youth-serving organizations have little training in program evaluation. Youth programs are often driven to seek training because of external and immediate expectations for evaluation data. In these situations youth programs do not have the luxury of learning all they need to know before beginning an evaluation. Arnold (2006) proposed a tested framework for building evaluation capacity with 4-H youth development educators. This framework consisted of four strategies: 1) using logic models for articulating

program plans and theory; 2) providing one-on-one evaluation assistance; 3) facilitating small-team collaborative evaluations; and 4) conducting larger-scale evaluations. In this instance the author was an internal evaluator working side by side with program staff to build evaluation capacity while conducting internal evaluations at the same time. While the framework Arnold proposes was effective, most youth organizations do not have an internal evaluator to do this work. Others have proposed frameworks that are collaborative efforts between external evaluators and program staff that have demonstrated ECB effectiveness (Garcia-Itiarte, Suarez, Balcazar, Taylor-Ritzler, & Luna, 2010; Huffman, Thomas, & Lawrenz, 2008).

Although collaborative and internal ECB strategies show promise, the overall need for evaluation capacity building remains largely unaddressed. We suspect that the evaluative needs of youth development programs far outweigh the professional evaluation capacity and resources to meet those needs. However, in the youth development arena a new approach to program evaluation is gaining considerable momentum, and that is engaging youth in participatory evaluations of the programs that serve them. This approach, often called Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE), has a double impact in that programs gain valuable evaluation data and youth gain developmentally. Youth participatory evaluation may well be an example of development in the limited approaches for evaluating youth programs identified in the 1992 Carnegie Council report.

Youth Participatory Evaluation

Participatory evaluation, with its emphasis on the *practical* use of evaluation findings and the *transformative* effect it can have on program participants (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998), has attracted significant interest from evaluators seeking a more holistic approach to program evaluation. In addition, involving youth in participatory evaluation had become increasingly common in the past eight years (Arnold, Dolenc, & Wells, 2008; Camino, Zeldin, Mook, & O'Conner, 2004; Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2007; Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2006; Chen, Weiss, & Johnston-Nicholson, 2010; Delgado, 2006; Fetterman, 2003; London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003; Sabo, 2003; Sabo Flores, 2008). Engaging youth in the evaluation of the programs that affect them has powerful potential, while at the same time facilitating and demonstrating the values and outcomes of positive youth development programs.

A recent youth participatory evaluation conducted by Girls Incorporated (Girls Inc.) (Chen, Weiss, & Johnston-Nicholson, 2010) highlights many of the converging factors that support the potential of this approach. In this evaluation, girls ages 12-18 formed research teams to evaluate the effectiveness of the Girls Inc. program. The evaluation questions focused on how the program helps girls achieve the program's stated goals (e. g. inspiring girls to be strong, smart, and bold) as well as how the program could better meet the needs of girls and their communities. Two key forces provided the impetus for the study: 1) the desire to involve girls in diverse leadership and advocacy roles; and 2) the increasing demand for "measurable and convincing evidence" of the positive impact of the program. Although the project was deemed successful, considerable support and resources contributed to the success. The national organization provided financial support as well as research and evaluation expertise. Each site was trained using a common curriculum and ongoing technical assistance and support was provided to the local affiliates. The success of the project did not "just happen" but was the result of careful planning, use of evidence-based practices, and adequate training and support. It is important to keep in mind that evaluations employing more traditional designs and methods also do not "just happen" but require similar investment of time and resources.

When considering ECB through youth participatory evaluation, several strengths come to mind. First, unlike methods that build staff capacity to conduct evaluations, building youth capacity along with staff automatically secures the capacity at a larger organizational level. The youth themselves become invested in the evaluation, thus increasing the likelihood of a positive evaluation culture within the program. Second, involving youth in evaluation becomes the program itself. As we know, evaluation efforts can often be viewed as “add-on” activities that need to be done in addition to programming. With YPE, the evaluation becomes the program method itself, employing well-established program elements such as youth-adult partnerships (Camino, 2005; Zeldin, Larson, Camino, & O’Conner, 2005) that contribute to the positive development of the youth participants while at the same time conducting the evaluation. Going back to Eccles and Gootman’s (2002) summary of the usefulness of non-experimental designs for assessing program implementation and identifying patterns of effective practice, YPE has strong potential for gathering meaningful and reliable data as youth are often more willing to open up and share their feelings with other youth than adult researchers.

Conclusion

We opened this paper with the goal of providing a timely and useful lens through which to view the evaluation of youth development programs. The field of positive youth development, with the particular definitions and criteria that define it, has matured considerably in the past 20 years. Likewise, issues related to the best practices for the evaluation of youth programs have grown in tandem. The call from the Carnegie Council to develop expertise in program evaluation and to find innovative new methods for conducting valid evaluations remains a driver in youth program evaluation today.

There is no question that comprehensive, random experimental evaluation designs remain the “gold standard” in the minds of all who struggle to define what is meant by acceptable evidence for program effectiveness. This is especially true for providing evidence to garner political and financial support for programs. Related, and of equal concern for many, is the articulation of program outcomes and valid methods for determining a program’s effect on those outcomes. Unfortunately, the emphasis on rigorous outcome evaluation can be a barrier to the development of additional evaluation strategies that are more appropriate, meaningful and useful for some youth programs. It is highly unlikely that these concerns will be fully addressed as we move forward; rather they will assume a perennial role in the debate over what constitutes acceptable evidence.

Meanwhile, while the debate rages on, youth programs large and small, operated by staff with scarce resources, and even less evaluative experience will continue valiantly to make a difference in the lives of the youth with whom they work. These practitioners will bear steady witness to their own success, often through the narrative stories of the youth who blossom in their programs.

As practicing evaluators, our hope is that this article encourages youth development practitioners to attend to program quality and implementation and the resulting link to program outcomes. Without sound program implementation, an evaluation of outcomes is meaningless. Likewise, we hope for the development of better evaluation capacity building frameworks, and that practitioners will begin to involve youth as evaluators of the program that affect them.

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Diversity and Inclusion in Youth Development: What We Can Learn from Marginalized Young People

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Abstract: As we commemorate 100 years of youth development programs whose origins are traced to organizations founded in the United States, we consider key insights as well as strategies relevant for diversity and inclusion. Many of the large, mainstream youth development organizations and programs that were founded over a century ago now primarily serve youth in the “mainstream”: youth from the middle classes, traditional families, and dominant cultural groups. A growing body of scholarship considers the positive development of youth who are marginalized due to their social class, ability, sexuality, citizenship status, race, ethnicity, or culture. We draw insights from studies of youth and families who are immigrants, or who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT). These findings provide a vantage point for considering ways that contemporary youth development organizations might stretch the margins, or adapt their practices, in order to reach and include all youth.

Introduction

As we commemorate 100 years of youth development programs and practices whose origins are traced largely to organizations founded in the United States, we observe several contradictions or tensions in the field. There have been profound changes in the daily lives of youth and adolescents during the last century—demographic, social, economic, political, and technological—that have resulted in a youth population that is increasingly diverse in personal and family characteristics as well as life experiences. Yet many youth development organizations and programs that were founded over a century ago primarily serve youth in the mainstream: youth from the middle classes, from traditional families, and from dominant cultural groups. Although a number of programs were and still are designed to serve marginalized youth, in many mainstream programs and many communities youth at the margins continue to be absent or left out—whether intentionally or due to structural conditions

or processes that emerged over a century of institutionalization. Notably, in some communities new organizations and programs have emerged to respond to the needs of youth on the fringes of a rapidly changing society.

Scholarship on positive youth development has begun to consider the needs of youth who are marginalized due to their social class, ability, sexuality, citizenship status, race, ethnicity, or culture. We use the term “marginalized” to denote the ways that some young people are pushed to the margins; the term emphasizes the social processes that render youth marginal, rather than focusing on deficits based in the person (i.e., defining youth as “at risk” or “vulnerable”). We highlight several areas of knowledge that have grown out of studies of youth and families who are immigrants, or who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT). These findings provide a vantage point for considering ways that contemporary youth development organizations might stretch the margins, or adapt their practices, in order to reach and include all youth.

In this article we consider recent research on immigrant and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth that we argue might inform current youth development programming, practice, and thinking. These young people grow up, as does everyone, in the mainstream—but their experiences often exist outside of it. That is, their identities and experiences do not always align with those of the dominant culture (whether defined as U.S.-born, European-American, or heterosexual). Research in the past decade about the lives of immigrant and LGBT youth can offer insights about the possibilities of positive youth development for young people who may not be in the mainstream. In some youth organizations, marginalized youth are absent or invisible; in contrast, other youth organizations specifically serve marginalized youth. Our review is relevant in both cases by pointing to pertinent lessons regarding diversity and inclusion for all contemporary youth organizations.

Historical Perspectives

In the last 100 years, the contexts of youth in the United States have undergone profound change. The impact of industrialization, starting in the mid-19th century, created new patterns of work, education, and family life, which changed the role that young people played in society and ultimately led to the recognition of a new stage in the life course: adolescence. New employment opportunities led to dramatic migrations from rural to urban settings, and brought immigrants from around the world. As a result, cities emerged with dense areas of people living in close proximity to each other. In agrarian society, many children participated as laborers on their parents’ farms. As machines began to replace workers, one way to protect adult jobs was to remove adolescents from the work force. Another concern was that factory jobs required more sophisticated skills and thereby additional training. Thus, adolescence became viewed as a time of preparation for adulthood, in which compulsory schooling instead of work became the norm for young people. This perspective also led to the view of youth as less capable than adults and more in need of guidance, and child protectionists argued to keep children out of work to avoid harm (Modell & Goodman, 1990).

Over time, these two trends—a decline in paid child labor and a rise in formal schooling – helped create a childhood culture with age-graded peer groups, norms, and rituals. Discretionary time emerged in the afternoons when, especially in urban neighborhoods, overcrowding led thousands of young people to explore the streets, enjoy a few hours of freedom, and possibly earn extra money. Concerned about the dangers of street life both in terms of potential injuries and exposure to immoral behavior, many adults responded by

developing informal afterschool activities that would alleviate children's boredom and provide opportunities for organized play (Halpern, 2002). Others created youth organizations with structured activities to promote American citizenship (Strong & Posner, 2010). Throughout the century, the purpose of these programs has evolved as they responded to political mandates, cultural changes, and the varying developmental needs of children.

The first community-based afterschool programs were developed in immigrant communities in urban areas around the country with various goals, including care and protection, especially of younger children; the creation of greater opportunities for play; the prevention of problems, especially crime and delinquency; cultivating vocational talents; the negotiation of sexual risks, particularly for girls; and the "Americanization" of immigrant families (Halpern, 2002). Many of these programs were originally informal boys' clubs that expanded into larger play areas and gymnasiums as more children showed up. As settlements appeared in the late 1880s, they also began doing "boys' and girls' work" (p. 183), with churches and religious groups providing programs that served specific ethnic groups. Throughout the decades, these programs have changed course in response to the political climate and child health needs of the period. Primarily run by volunteers, afterschool programs have eventually been recognized as a formal practice, but the field of community-based afterschool programs has never developed into one formal system of services.

Another type of afterschool support for youth that emerged in the mid-19th century was outreach programs, many of which were developed through Park and Recreation Departments (PARDs). These innovative programs sought to find ways to engage youth—also those living in high risk environments—who were not attracted to organized services (Bocarro & Witt, 2002). Specifically, the programs were designed to engage "dangerous and threatening youth" in their own area, and involved individuals with labels such as "detached youth workers," "street workers," and "extension workers" (p. 68), who worked with small numbers of youth in informal, non-organized settings, usually on the street. While such programs have been demonstrated to reach racial and ethnic minority youth, they have historically suffered from instability because they are typically funded as temporary solutions, are not facility based, and have high staff attrition rates.

During the Progressive Era (1890-1920) a new group of institutions emerged as structured and formal youth organizations with the goal of developing productive youth who could become contributing members of society. These organizations emerged during a period when a group of White European social reformers sought to address what they perceived as the "degeneracy, effeminacy, and artificiality of modern American culture" (Strong & Posner, 2010, p. 393). Some of the oldest youth development organizations, such as YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts, Camp Fire USA, and 4-H Clubs, were founded particularly in response to a growing view that young people were becoming potential problems. From their inception, these organizations shared a common goal to provide opportunities for youth "to be heard and supported in a changing social world" (Costello, Toles, Spielberg, & Wynn, 2001, p. 207). The YMCA and YWCA, independent organizations, emerged to help youth who were already working and handling adult responsibilities. 4-H began as a way to provide agricultural education to youth, and provided opportunities for youth to become independent, responsible, and productive citizens. Youth organizations such as the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and Camp Fire USA were formed to provide opportunities for youth of European descent to develop close relationships with nature through woodcraft and wilderness sports (Strong & Posner, 2010).

Critical reviews of 150 years of youth development organizations point out that most community-based programs were geared toward youth of European descent (Halpern, 2002; Strong & Posner, 2010). As such, the organizations did not actively exclude ethnic minority youth, but rather the programs were designed to emulate the dominant mainstream cultural values of U.S. society which were, and in many ways still are, largely guided by values endorsed by White, European-descent heterosexuals. Contemporary evidence from large, mainstream youth organizations indicates that ethnic minority youth are underrepresented, and, for example, more likely to drop out of the mainstream youth programs compared to White youth (Russell & Heck, 2008). In recent years, due to growing awareness of this under-representation of youth of color, as well as charges of cultural appropriation and lawsuits alleging discrimination, many of these youth organizations are reexamining their goals, programs, and outreach strategies. To remain vital and relevant in the 21st century, some have begun to reframe their practices to include hard-to-reach youth populations. For example, Camp Fire USA has become more culturally inclusive and encouraged participants to wear ceremonial garb based on their ethnic traditions. The BSA has launched a Hispanic Initiative to engage Latino youth in its sports program based on soccer and scouting (Boy Scouts of America, 2010; Strong & Posner, 2010). However, scholars and practitioners recognize that much work still needs to be done to make full inclusion possible.

Thus, despite efforts of some youth development organizations to address the needs of youth of color, studies show that ethnic minority youth, including African American, Latino, and American Indian youth, have not participated in youth programs to the same degree as middle-class, European American youth (Villarruel, Moniero-Sieburth, Dunbar, & Outley, 2005). These findings are unfortunate, given that ethnic minority youth are more likely to come from disadvantaged communities and tend to be at greater risk for negative health, academic, and developmental outcomes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008; Hay, Cortson, Hollist, Alzheimer, & Schaible, 2007). Many have experienced prolonged poverty, discrimination, segregation, and disproportionate involvement with justice systems. These youth could greatly benefit from participating in programs geared toward their specific developmental needs.

A large body of literature documents the marginalization of LGBT youth in the context of peer groups at school (D'Augelli, Pilkington, & Hershberger, 2002). However, there is little existing research that specifically documents the participation (or under-representation) of sexual minority youth or LGBT youth in youth programs. Regardless of a lack of research, the most obvious evidence of exclusion of sexual minority youth is the 2000 Supreme Court decision that allows the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) to establish exclusionary membership criteria that applies to youth or adults who are openly gay.

In summary, youth development programs began with the goal of reaching marginalized youth. A growing interest in educational and recreational opportunities for middle-class youth emerged with the social and economic changes of the 20th century, resulting in institutionalization of youth programs within the mainstream, and ultimately leaving out many marginalized young people. Undoubtedly some efforts intentionally excluded youth at the margins (e.g., the BSA explicit exclusion of gay youth). Yet many mainstream programs unintentionally fail to authentically attract youth who are marginalized. Perhaps unknowingly, some institutions and programs do not attract or are not relevant for these youth. Below we consider recent studies of immigrant and LGBT youth in order to understand why and how some youth may not be attracted to, or may be rejected from youth programs.

Immigrant Youth in the United States

Even though the United States has always been a society of immigrants, immigration has emerged as a public and political issue at multiple points in history; this is certainly true during the last decade. After several decades of stable immigration in the late twentieth century, major shifts in immigration patterns have occurred in the United States and around the world (Russell, Crockett, & Chao, 2010). Individuals and families from Latin America and Asia/Pacific Rim make up the largest groups of current immigrants in the United States. In spite of very different cultures and histories, these groups share some commonalities that shape family life and youth development. At the risk of stereotyping or making overly broad generalizations, we describe some of these commonalities below, but acknowledge that there is great variability in cultural beliefs and practices both within and between immigrant groups. We draw from several areas of research in order to illustrate broad cultural differences; we then consider the relevance and implications for positive youth development.

First, the dominant culture in the United States is an archetype of Western individualism. By this we mean that the culture of youth, families, and communities is rooted in deeply held beliefs about the importance of individual autonomy, self-sufficiency, and achievement. For youth in this context a fundamental goal is often the development of independence and autonomy: indeed this is the very definition of adulthood (Arnett, 2004). In sometimes stark contrast, the largest immigrant groups in the United States come from cultures rooted in collectivism. Values and beliefs give primacy to the social group (for example, the extended family network), and rather than emphasizing the independence of the individual, the individual is understood as interdependent. That is, the self is defined not as a singular entity, but rather in relationship with the key members of the social group. This interdependence plays out in family life in ways that surprise many European Americans: families are defined not as post-1950s “nuclear” families, but as networks of kin relationships that may include multiple generations and biological as well as extended ties. In the case of immigrants from some Asian cultures, the “family” may include ancestors. In many Latino/a families there are complex family relations (*e/compadrazco*) that include extended kin, godparents, and close family friends, with whom relationships are often defined in terms of age, birth order, and gender. In such a family network, youth development is experienced and understood within a web of interdependent relationships. For example, parental sacrifice is a major dimension of parenting and parent-adolescent relationships (Chao & Kaeochinda, 2010); although parental sacrifice is a universal characteristic, in emphasizing the development of a child’s independence from parents, Western (United States origin) models often overlook the sacrifices and things parents give up for their children, and thus have not accounted for the possibility of interdependence in family and community life.

Second, the communication in collectivist cultures is often indirect, relying on shared understandings of social contexts. Whereas U.S. Western communication is typically direct and verbal, for many immigrant youth, communication in families and the broader society may be based in roles and duties that are understood and well-defined, and thus unstated. For example, Asian American youth report that, unlike popular media representations of U.S. families, parents may not say “I love you”; however, their love is unquestioned by youth—it is understood by virtue of the family relationship and does not have to be stated (Russell, Crockett, & Chao, 2010).

A third cultural difference in many immigrant communities is the degree to which the faith community and the family serve as the major civic institutions. That is, “civic participation” is

defined in the United States as engagement in the polity; in contrast, family life is “private.” Yet for many immigrant communities, the family network may be embedded in the religious community, and this network is the polity. The distinctions between “private” and “public” life may not be meaningful in the same way for families from collectivist cultures. Thus, in traditional Latino families the rituals of family and community life revolve around intersections of faith and extended family which may define the community (Russell & Romero, 2011). This cultural understanding of networks may explain differences in civic participation (Gregory et al., 2006). For example, studies show that Asian American parents are less involved at their children’s schools; however, they are more involved in education planning and guidance with their children (Chao, 1996). Therefore, it is not that families are “uninvolved,” but that they are involved in different ways and based on different principles of relationships and interactions.

The cultural differences that exist in current immigrant communities in the United States have several implications for youth development programs and practices in the contemporary United States, particularly in terms of how we reach out to immigrant youth. A fundamental implication is simply for youth professionals to understand how starkly different the assumptions about social relationships, communication styles with non-family elders or other same-age peers, and “participation” in youth programming may be for youth from non-European American cultural backgrounds.

One issue to consider is the degree to which we emphasize individual achievement (e.g., competition) compared to collective learning and collaborative success. How might our emphasis respond and reinforce Western cultural models and potentially alienate (or at least be unfamiliar for) youth from non-Western cultures? The role of individual competition in youth programs has been the subject of debate for years (Fetsch & Yang, 2002). The traditional 4-H club, for example, is often a model of collaborative learning, and yet competitions at a county or state fair place the emphasis on individual achievement or personal success (although there are categories in some competitions for group or club submissions). Suggestions to shift focus in 4-H record-keeping from competition to the development of life skills (Diem & Devitt, 2003) may, for example, be an opportunity to consider how life skills development might be accomplished collaboratively.

Another issue is the extent to which aspects of our programs “assume” knowledge and an understanding of history among youth and adult participants. Given the 100-year histories of so many U.S. youth organizations, have programs become subcultures that rely on assumed values and goals? Many of these organizations have long and rich histories that involve multiple generations of family ties to specific programs in the United States. How much do we assume that youth will simply know what to expect before they begin as participants? Further, many of the major U.S. youth programs (e.g., 4-H clubs; Scouts; Camp Fire) were designed based on a model of adult volunteer participation and leadership, and rely on this model to sustain the basic institution. Yet efforts have been ongoing to understand why Latino/a parents, for example, are under-represented among youth program adult volunteers. In a study designed to investigate this question, it was discovered that the term “leadership” did not resonate with many involved Latino/a adults: they did not view their community engagement as leading, but rather viewed their role as collectively supporting children in the community (Gregory et al., 2006). This study demonstrates that institutional organizations and structures, and assumptions about shared understandings of things as basic as “volunteering,” may create barriers to inclusion for marginalized youth and their families. There are important implications for how we reach out to youth participants and adult volunteers, and for sustaining engagement and participation of diverse communities.

Our point is not that current programs are on the wrong track. The issue does not have to be about individual *versus* collaborative success, or explicit *versus* implicit communication and goals. Rather, we might think carefully about how and where we currently place emphasis, and whether there are opportunities for extending or adding new models of reaching youth that might draw in and engage those that have been underrepresented as the population of the United States becomes increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth

LGBT youth have emerged in the last decade as a visible identity-based group among adolescents in the United States. Most youth development professionals—certainly those in mid-career or later—grew up at a time when “coming out” (disclosing an LGBT identity to others) simply did not happen in adolescence, but was something that occurred in young adulthood or later. Contemporary youth are among the first to come out as LGBT in large numbers. Because in prior generations people simply did not come out during the teenage years, their presence and visibility today has challenged many of the major institutions that guide the lives of adolescence. Families, schools, faith communities, and community-based or youth organizations have not had frameworks for understanding and incorporating LGBT youth (Russell, 2002).

The visibility of LGBT youth was prompted by a number of factors. The HIV/AIDS crisis made homosexuality publicly visible in ways that had been historically unprecedented. With this visibility came a growing LGBT social movement. In addition, early reports began to highlight apparently extreme levels of health and behavioral risk among gay youth (several of the early studies drew from community-based samples made of up adolescent gay boys). This attention prompted a growing body of research, particularly during the last decade, on the health and well-being of LGBT youth, research which showed dramatic health disparities for these young people (Saewyc, 2011). There is clear scientific consensus that LGBT youth are vulnerable compared to their heterosexual peers. More recent work has begun to examine and explore the possibilities of resilience for LGBT youth (Russell, 2005), and other work has examined the contexts of development for LGBT youth in order to better understand the origins and explanations for risk and resilience in their lives (Horn, Kosciw, & Russell, 2009).

Attention to the role of prejudice and discrimination as the mechanism that undermines well-being for all youth has grown. For example, studies show that racial/ethnic discrimination is associated with mental health distress and compromised academic performance for ethnic minority students (e.g., Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003), and a number of studies have shown that anti-LGBT harassment is a common experience for contemporary youth and that it is linked with significant health risks (Bontempo & D’Augelli, 2002; D’Augelli, Pilkington & Hershberger, 2002; Poteat & Espelage, 2007). In most studies, the focus has been on the school setting, and the message is clear that peer harassment in schools is often pervasive, particularly for LGBT youth. Further, discriminatory or prejudicial experiences undermine not only the marginalized young person (i.e., the LGBT young person), but have been shown to have negative effects on youth who simply witness harassment (Rivers, Poteat, Noret, & Ashurst, 2010), and thus create hostile school climates for all youth. We should assume that similar processes operate among youth and adults in youth programs (indeed, one professional has written about his personal experiences with homophobia in a youth program; Myers, 2008).

Given the undermining effects of prejudice, the minority stress model (Meyer, 2003) offers an explanation of the pathways through which prejudice influences well-being. In addition to

routine stressors, marginalized people experience minority stress, or discriminatory experiences. Through these experiences LGBT people come to expect rejection or discrimination, and therefore may attempt to conceal their marginalized identities in order to avoid discrimination. These processes contribute to “internalized homophobia”—or beliefs that the societal stereotypes and negative attitudes about homosexuality and LGBT people are legitimate, resulting in negative feelings about themselves (Meyer, 2003). This model is important because it offers an explanation for multiple health disparities based on attention to interactions of social and cultural attitudes (homophobia), actual prejudice and discrimination experiences, and internalized processes that lead to undermined psychological well-being. The model also suggests that important intervening factors could interrupt the strong link between marginalization and negative outcomes: positive social supports and coping strategies ought to lessen the influence of discrimination and negative self-evaluation on adjustment. In fact, youth development programs are conceptualized as playing a potential buffering role between adversity in a youth’s life and ultimate positive adjustment. Thus we can begin to conceptualize the buffering role of social supports in youth development programs for LGBT youth. Do youth programs provide strong interpersonal support for youth, regardless of a youth’s marginal identity or status, but particularly for those who are marginalized? Do the relationships with peers, adult volunteers and professionals, and the content and context of youth development activities provide the needed buffers to support LGBT and other marginalized youth?

Explicit attention to LGBT youth in youth development program contexts has been limited. Because so much attention has focused on the experiences of LGBT youth at school, some research has been conducted on youth participation in school clubs such as gay-straight alliances (GSAs), which are clubs formed to provide support, education, or advocacy for promoting a positive school environment for all students regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity (Griffin, Lee, Waugh, & Beyer, 2004). Several studies have shown that participation in these largely youth-led school clubs is associated with school and community connectedness and civic engagement (e.g., Russell, Toomey, Crockett, & Laub, 2010). One study based on focus group discussions with high school GSA leaders examined how they experienced empowerment through GSAs; youth reported that being in the GSA gave them knowledge about LGBT issues and their rights as students, which was the basis for empowerment through its influence on them personally and on their relationships with others at school. Personally, the knowledge they gained was perceived as helping them develop their voice and feel good about themselves; their relationships with other students and teachers were affected because they felt that they could make a difference for others or leave a legacy at their school through participation in sustaining the GSA for students that would follow them. Together, these personal and relational changes were the basis for empowerment described by these GSA club leaders (Russell, Muraco, Subramaniam, & Laub, 2009).

The results of youth participation in GSAs look in many ways like the results that are intended from youth development programs: youth gain important intellectual, psychological, and social developmental benefits from participation in youth programs (Eccles & Gootman, 2002), and not surprisingly, we see similar results for GSAs. Through collaborative activities toward a common goal, youth develop life skills that are crucial for engaged citizenship.

GSAs exist because the world is typically unfriendly to LGBT youth, yet they are an interesting example of the ways that youth development strategies might be particularly relevant for marginalized youth. But what are the implications for mainstream programs designed to meet the needs of all youth? Obviously, prejudice or homophobia may exist in any organization: only through proactive critical reflection and discussion can we assure that we are conscious of and

aware of the ways that heterosexism, sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression may operate through youth programs. But a clear question is: how accepting—and affirming—of LGBT youth are typical youth programs? And how might youth programs be proactive in dismantling even subtle ways that LGBT youth and others may be marginalized or unwelcome?

Conclusion

What began as afterschool programs for poor, unemployed youth of working parents grew into an informal system of multiple local, regional, national, and international institutions serving generations of children and youth. Since the beginning, efforts have always been made to reach marginalized youth, yet during the course of a century, a mainstream has emerged in the United States, one that reflects dominant cultures. The consequence is that some youth remain underrepresented and underserved in youth development programs. In this article we have drawn from recent studies of youth who are often marginal—immigrants and LGBT youth—in order to make the case that the explanation for marginalization is not in the youth, but in the culture of contemporary youth development programs. Based on this synthesis of prior research, we offer concrete suggestions for questions that youth development program professionals might ask themselves about their organizations or programs—questions that may yield new insights or vantage points for creating organizations that values diversity and inclusion for all youth (see Appendix A for question examples).

Based on our discussion we suggest two broad implications for contemporary youth development institutions or programs—first, our basic understanding of “youth,” and second, the cultural or community relevance of youth development programs and program cultures. First, this work suggests that we need to question the very meaning and understanding of “youth.” The notion of youth in relation to community has very different meanings if we understand youth as a project of developing independence from family (within community) versus a process of emerging into community. (We acknowledge that these are not necessarily opposing understandings for many youth or communities.) For youth development professionals, the tension lies in the need to understand a youth’s individual needs while considering the broad network of family, social, and community relations and experiences that may define the needs for that young person.

The second implication has to do with the culture of youth development institutions and programs. Youth become marginal from the mainstream in ways that are often invisible because the mainstream appears “normal.” However, if we consider dominant culture as a collection of peculiar norms and habits (habits that are only “normal” because they are dominant), we may begin to uncover and understand processes of marginalization. In doing so, the question is no longer “why aren’t marginal youth present?” but “what is it about programs and institutions that enables marginalization?” These questions could lead to examination of the ways that persistent inequalities related to race and ethnicity, social class, or sexuality appear in youth programs, and ultimately how these inequalities might be dismantled.

In summary, we propose that a critical examination of the ways we think about and understand “youth” and the culture of youth development programs offers the possibility to address persistent inequalities in the field, and the potential to reach and include marginalized youth in new ways. Doing so could chart a new path for the field—one characterized not only by addressing the needs of youth most “at risk,” or providing for youth in the mainstream, but through cultivating institutions and programs that work to truly include and meet the needs of all youth.

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Appendix A

Text Box: Questions to ask ourselves regarding diversity and inclusion:

- In what ways do the family or cultural experiences of youth differ, and what implications do these differences have for our program? (How) Could we acknowledge and incorporate those differences as sources of unique strengths that youth bring to our program?
- Can we detect differences in communication styles among youth in our program, and account for those differences in the ways we that interact and structure activities?
- What is the relative emphasis on individual versus group achievement? (How) Could we structure our program to incorporate a range of individual and collective activities and goals?
- How much is the history of our program part of the culture of the program? (How) Could we emphasize the values that the history implies rather than the specific history?
- How can we acknowledge and value differences of culture and sexuality among youth in our program?
- (How) Do our programs provide interpersonal support for youth – particularly and explicitly for those who may be marginalized? (Are LGBT, immigrant, ethnic minority, or economically disadvantaged youth present and included?)
- Do we actively confront racism, sexism, and homophobia in our program? Do we foster understanding, awareness, and skills for youth to address prejudice and discrimination in its many forms?

The Many Faces, Features and Outcomes of Youth Engagement

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The Many Faces, Features and Outcomes of Youth Engagement

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Abstract: Civic engagement, experiential education, positive youth development, youth leadership, service-learning: what is it about these programmatic models that account for their popularity and impact over decades? What's at the core, how are they similar and different, and what differential impacts and benefits might various types or forms of youth engagement affect? The lack of consensus on conceptual frameworks and definitions of youth participation and engagement has been identified as one of the issues plaguing the field and restricting progress of youth engagement research and practice (O'Donoghue, Kirshner & McLaughlin, 2002). The authors present a conceptual framework called the Rings of Engagement that captures the myriad ways in which people think about youth engagement. The literature on the benefits and outcomes of each ring or type of youth engagement is highlighted. The authors conclude with recommendations for further research which will guide training, stakeholder-driven communication tools created to garner support, ways to act locally while working at the intermediary level to provide the supports necessary to promote and support youth engagement.

Introduction

The concept of *youth engagement* has been an enduring, yet evolving feature in the landscape of community-based youth development work. It has been called many things over the years: youth leadership, civic engagement, youth participation, youth voice, to name but a few. And it means very different things to different people.

For some, the focus of youth engagement is on ensuring that young people participate in high quality programs. For others, youth engagement is about helping young people find activities

they are passionate about. Another notion of youth engagement emphasizes the value of youth voice and input, or having a say in matters that affect them. Some consider youth and adults collectively sharing decision-making power and authority to be a hallmark of youth engagement. And researchers and practitioners largely agree that all these forms of youth engagement, done well, are good for young people, programs and communities (Sullivan, 2011).

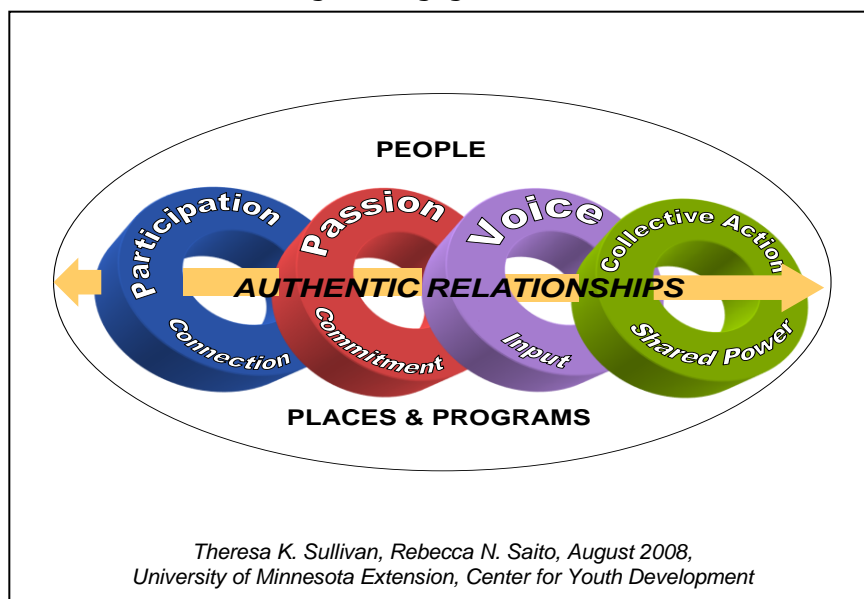
So what do these different types of youth engagement have in common? What's at the core that makes them so attractive and enduring? In what ways do they overlap and how do they differ? What outcomes can they affect? And what will it take to ensure that young people, especially those in communities and families with limited resources, experience multiple engaging programs, experiences and relationships? These questions are at the heart of this article.

Our effort to unravel and identify the many threads and forms of youth engagement is motivated by the need to move forward a comprehensive agenda that advances understanding, support and promotion of quality youth engagement opportunities. Such an agenda could create communities in which young people's strengths and assets are recognized, utilized and built upon through multiple developmentally-linked opportunities to connect and contribute.

While it is clear from the literature that youth engagement is important and beneficial for all young people, this article pays extra attention to the needs of older youth, age 14 and above, particularly those that live in lower-income families and communities. Participation in youth programs is lowest for these teens (Lochner, Allen & Blyth, 2009), and as they get older they require a broader range of opportunities that match their developmental needs for expanding horizons, autonomy, challenge, voice and decision-making.

We present the Rings of Youth Engagement (Figure 1) as a conceptual framework for organizing this chapter. We describe and summarize the benefits and impacts associated with each of the four types of youth engagement in the model. We conclude with a discussion of enduring challenges and possible next steps to ensure that all youth have the opportunities to engage in the programs and activities that they want and need.

Figure 1
Rings of Engagement



Conceptual Framework: Rings of Engagement

To bridge the various definitions and understandings of youth engagement, Sullivan (2011) designed a study to conceptualize, convey and stimulate alternative ways of thinking about youth engagement by integrating learning from scientific research, practice-based literature, and the experiences of practitioners and youth.

This research process both informed and was informed by Sullivan and Saito's conceptual theory of differential yet related aspects of engagement. The "Rings of Engagement" framework (see Figure 1) visualizes four critical dimensions of youth engagement: participation, passion, voice, and collective action. All are dependent on a core of authentic relationships and a context of engaging people, places and programs. The latter is represented by the fifth ring surrounding the other four.

Benefits of participation are strengthened through opportunities for connection to positive people and places. Passion includes commitment to ongoing growth and development in a particular area of pursuit. Voice requires opportunities for youth to have input into decisions that affect them. Collective action includes shared power and decision-making authority among youth and adults.

Sullivan's study involved

- 1) an extensive review of the literature,
- 2) interviews, focus groups and program observations with youth and adults at four case study sites,
- 3) ten half-day regional forums and two facilitated one-hour discussions with adult practitioners, and
- 4) video-taped discussion and interviews with experienced "master practitioners" who mentor others in the effective practice of youth engagement.

Practitioners in Sullivan's study and the youth development literature (Blyth, 2006; Eccles et al., 1993) asserted the importance of all four types of engagement for the well-being of youth and society. Practitioners said they do not see the rings as hierarchical. Nor do they see them representing successive stages in which youth need to have experienced one in order to be "ready" for another. Experiences in any of the rings of engagement can lead to opportunities, interest and/or readiness to engage in other ways. See figure 2 for a brief overview of each of the rings.

Figure 2
Overview of the Rings of Engagement

	DEFINITION	BENEFITS/ OUTCOMES	BOOSTING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WITHIN PROGRAMS
PARTICIPATION	<i>Young people participate in formal, informal and non-formal activities offering opportunities to connect with positive people and places; and challenges/supports that promote growth and development.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychosocial development • Academic achievement • Physical fitness • Mastery of skills • Reduced risk taking • Positive identity • Civic participation • Gateway to other engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess and market existing youth programs & opportunities • Remove barriers to participation • Understand needs/wants of youth (e.g. have fun, time with friends, develop skills, build resume, accomplish something that matters) and create opportunities that appeal to their interests.
PASSION	<i>Becoming engrossed in or passionate about something, based on experiencing the activity itself as rewarding, regardless of outcome or external rewards. Marked by high levels of attention, concentration, enthusiasm and commitment.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life satisfaction • Motivation for continued learning, practice, growth and development • Social approval, gateway to a supportive community • Contributions to social good • Academic achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choices regarding types/depth of participation • Social opportunities with peers • Authentic relationships with adults • Personal connection/cultural relevance • Clear goals, winnable challenges, immediate feedback • Identify, build on strengths • Opportunities for mastery, leadership, real world contribution • Opportunities for personal reflection
VOICE	<i>Young people have opportunities to voice their ideas and have input into programs, policies and practices that affect them.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced sense of efficacy/agency • Problem-solving, communication, advocacy skills • Academic achievement • Improved programs that get others participating, passionate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic opportunities to be heard, have an impact • Avoid tokenism • Report back with impact of youth ideas on policy, practice • Build new perspectives/skills for youth and adults <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Active listening – Appreciating diverse strengths – Facilitating effective conversations
COLLECTIVE ACTION	<i>Youth and adults share decision-making authority as they work together to: a) achieve shared goals within systems; and/or b) change or create new systems.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive civic identity • Sense of collective efficacy • Collaborative planning, decision-making, implementation skills • Critical social consciousness, analysis • Social/political change skills • Ongoing civic engagement • Organization–community change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify shared passions • Broaden perspectives re: youth/adult roles, relationships • Transparency about roles, authority, responsibilities • Develop and utilize collaborative processes, skills • Develop knowledge/skills with respect to sociopolitical issues/change • Identify and develop individual strengths within the collective • Stay flexible as issues/dynamics change

A recent study by Search Institute (Scales, Roehlkepartain, & Benson, 2010) found that the more types of youth engagement opportunities youth experience, the better off they will be. Youth who were highly engaged did better on academic, psychological, social-emotional and

behavioral outcomes. Unfortunately, only seven percent of youth in their study experienced high levels of all types of engagement.

Three important ideas were woven throughout the literature and practitioners' notions about all the forms of youth engagement:

1. ***Youth as Contributors and Leaders*** - One fundamental thread through all the forms of youth engagement is the recognition and belief that young people have skills, perspectives and expertise that can be tapped to help make activities and programs relevant, engaging and effective at promoting growth and development.
2. ***Developmental Perspectives*** - As children become teenagers, the kinds of programs and opportunities they need and want change. Adolescents need to develop their sense of identity and autonomy in the framework of ever-expanding social contexts; practice making important, impactful decisions; and learn attitudes and habits that will impact engagement throughout youth and adulthood. These normal developmental needs influence the types of programs and opportunities to which older adolescents are attracted. Programs that offer opportunities for voice, decision-making, connection to a broader community and action that meaningfully impacts that community fit the needs and interests of this group.
3. ***Reciprocal Relationships at the Core*** – Engagement depends on ongoing, authentic relationships between youth and adults. While youth engagement is often thought of as a process of adults engaging youth, quality youth engagement involves youth and adults engaging *with each other* in ways that benefit both.

Participation

Young people *participate* in a range of programs and opportunities that enable them to *connect* with positive people and experiences, through which they learn and develop new skills. This includes formal after-school, evening and weekend youth programs in non-profit youth or community organizations; public parks, schools, libraries; and various religious, arts, sports and civic organizations. Quality youth programs are described by some young people as “second homes” (Hirsch, 2005, pg. 41) where they develop supportive relationships with staff and other youth, try on new roles and identities (Konopka, 1973), learn new skills and explore new ideas and experiences. While the activities, venues and specific target outcomes vary greatly, high quality youth development programs can provide intentional, developmentally appropriate opportunities for young people to grow and develop that occur outside the formal school day (Blyth, 2006; Walker, 2006).

Benefits of Participation

Youth reap a wide range of positive developmental outcomes through participation, including physical health, positive psychosocial development, enhanced academic achievement, mastery of specific skills, reduction in violence and risk-taking behavior, and positive identity development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Pittman, Martin, & Williams, 2007; Resnick et al., 1997; Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000; Scales & Leffert, 1998; Walker, 2006; Weiss, Little, & Bouffard, 2005; Zeldin, Camino & Calvert, 2007). Scales et al. (2010) found that 15-year-olds who scored high on a relationships and opportunities index (measuring opportunities for participation and supportive relationships) were much more likely than low scorers to: work up to their ability at school (60% vs. 25%); have a grade point

average of 3.5 or higher (73% vs. 53%); have a sense of purpose and hope for their future (59% vs. 17%); and have a positive sense of their ethnic identity (56% vs. 15%).

Youth explore through participation ideas about who they can be and who they want to be as a member of the broader community, while building capacities, commitments, and social connections (Kahn & Westheimer, 2003) they need to succeed in their chosen roles. Flanagan (2003) found that participation, especially in diverse groups, can build a sense of belonging and social trust, a belief that “most people are fair, helpful, and trustworthy” (p. 167). She also found it widens the sphere of others to whom one feels a sense of connection and responsibility. And those who participate in adolescence are more likely to participate in community organizations and institutions throughout their lives (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss & Atkins, 2007; Youniss & Hart, 2005).

Only 19 percent of participants in the Scales, et al (2010) study scored high on their relationships and opportunities index. If youth don’t participate, they cannot reap the benefits outlined above (Herrera & Arbreton, 2003; Kennedy, Wilson, Valladres, & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). And in order to participate, young people need opportunities to do so.

The Participation Gap

There is a growing awareness and evidence that rates of participation in youth development programs and opportunities drop around age 12 or 13 and remain low through the rest of adolescence (Duffett & Johnson, 2004; Farrell, 2008; Herrera & Arbreton, 2003; Lauver, Little, & Weiss, 2004; Simpkins, Little, & Weiss, 2004; Sipe & Ma, 1998; Yohalem, Wilson-Ahlstrom, & Pittman, 2004,). Participation rates are especially low for youth who come from families and communities with lower incomes and opportunities (Littel & Wynn, 1989; Lochner, Allen, & Blyth, 2009; Pittman, Wilson-Ahlstrom, & Yohalem, 2003; Saito, Benson, Blyth, & Sharma, 1995). Freeman (2009) argues that the opportunities for experiencing and learning about citizenship are “highly unequal among youth of different backgrounds, cultures, race, and socio-economic status and therefore unique and different strategies must be employed to effectively address the issues and concerns necessary for highly effective youth civic engagement” (p.2).

Passion

Passionate engagement happens when youth become engrossed in some activity. It is marked by high levels of attention, concentration, enthusiasm and commitment. The latter can be seen in high levels of effort and persistence, as well as pride in success. When youth are passionate about an activity, it becomes rewarding in its own right, regardless of the outcome or external rewards like social approval, money or power (Nakamura, 2001; Weiss et al., 2005). When youth find an activity with which they engage in this way, Benson and Scales (2007) call it their “spark.” Nakamura calls it “vital engagement.” Csikszentmihalyi (1997) calls it “flow,” a state he and others assert we can find through any activity we find enjoyable, worth doing, challenging, and at which we can improve over time (Damon, 2008).

In a Search Institute study of 3,500 young people and 2,000 parents, the most commonly reported youth sparks, in order of the frequency with which they were reported are: creative arts; athletics; learning an academic subject (e.g. math, science or history); reading; helping others/volunteering; spirituality/religion; a commitment to living in a specific way (e.g. with joy, passion, caring); animal welfare; and leading (Benson, 2008).

Benefits of Passion

People who are more psychologically engaged in an activity tend to learn more (Pearce & Larson, 2006), and not just in the activity about which they are passionate. Research has shown that young people who have identified a spark or passion are more likely than others to do well in school. In addition, youth say that pursuing their spark(s) has helped them learn new things outside of school, including skills that could help them in a career. They also reported higher levels of initiative, sense of purpose, desire to make a difference, and tended to be less driven by external rewards like fame, power, comfort and money (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Scales, Roehlkepartain, & Benson, 2009, 2010).

These outcomes can lead to social approval and increased attention from supportive adults, as well as the satisfaction of mastering challenges which, in turn, motivate ongoing learning and practice (Benson & Scales, 2007; Blyth, 2006; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Pearce & Larson, 2006). When they pursue an activity over a long period of time, young people often become integrated into a community of people who engage in that activity, providing extended opportunities for in-depth social connection and the development of social skills (Benson & Scales, 2007; Minnesota Youth Engagement Case Studies, 2008; Nakamura, 2001).

Voice

Voice refers to opportunities for youth to express their ideas and have input into programs, policies and practices that affect them. While youth do not have full decision-making authority in this type of engagement, they have authentic input. This means they have the power to influence programs and policies by sharing their perspectives, information and/or making a persuasive case to adults who truly consider their ideas as they make decisions.

Youth find opportunities to voice their ideas and have input into programs and policies in a variety of ways, including: youth media (e.g. print, broadcast, internet, film); advisory boards; political advocacy; participating in surveys, interviews, focus groups; promoting ideas/products/services they value to other youth; and boycotting those they don't value (Search Institute, 2005). Some opportunities for youth voice will influence specific activities or projects within a program. Others will influence the broader policies and practices of an organization.

Benefits of Youth Voice

Organizations, communities and the young people they serve all benefit when youth have a voice. For example, when youth have a voice in the development of programs and activities, they help create programs in which they and other youth like them are more likely to participate and remain committed (Boyt & Skelton, 1997; Pittman et al., 2007; Saito, 2006; Smith, Akiva, Arrieux, & Jones, 2006; Walker, 2006). At the same time, youth gain new knowledge and skills when they have a voice in programs and policies that affect them. They learn about the structure and politics of organizations and institutions as they figure out how to effectively promote their interests within them. They can also develop problem-solving, communication and advocacy skills. Beyond direct learning from these experiences, youth who express their voice tend to do better overall in terms of academic achievement (Kahn & Westheimer, 2004; Zeldin et al., 2007).

Along the way, youth develop a sense of belonging (Flanagan, Stoppa, Syvertsen, & Stout, 2010), as well as efficacy and agency, coming to see themselves as people who can and do make organizations and communities better places. This in turn can motivate them to continue to try to make organizations and communities better places for all (Kahn & Westheimer, 2004; Pearce & Larson, 2006; Zimmerman & Campillo, 2003).

Flanagan et al. (2010) found that when they were encouraged to voice their views in school, students were more likely to act on behalf of a greater good beyond their direct self interest. For example, they were more likely to speak up if a peer was talking about doing something dangerous at school. When diverse youth voice their ideas and perspectives in the policy arena, it helps align the public agenda with the interests and concerns of a broader citizenry. It also enhances the likelihood that youth-oriented policies will achieve their intended outcomes because they are based on an understanding of the interests, values and motivations of those they are intended to serve (Boyt & Skelton, 1997; Noguera & Cannella, 2006).

Adults are also impacted. When youth have authentic opportunities to share their ideas, adults begin to appreciate their insights, wisdom and commitment, counteracting common adult perceptions that today's youth are academically lazy, prone to crime and violence, and uninterested in anything beyond themselves (Noguera & Cannella, 2006). This makes it more likely that adults will continue to create new opportunities for youth to engage in this way.

Collective Action

Collective action happens when youth and adults partner to achieve common goals, sharing power and authority to make decisions along the way. Watts and Flanagan (2007) distinguish between two distinct types of youth-adult partnerships for collective action, based on the breadth of decision-making power youth and adults share. In the first type of collective action, young people have clearly defined authority to shape policy and make decisions within current systems (e.g. setting editorial guidelines and making editorial decisions for a youth magazine; or identifying goals, setting criteria and awarding a subset of a foundation's grants to youth programs). In the second, youth and adults share power to change or create new systems. This happens when youth and adults share decision making authority for overall governance of an organization or when they organize together to make things happen in the broader community.

For some, the term "collective" is associated with forgoing individual responsibility and rights in support of the collective. We use the term collective action here to represent a process of developing and sharing one's own perspectives, passions and skills while working in collaboration with others to achieve shared goals. This includes thinking critically and asserting one's own rights and responsibility to disagree with the group; as well as speaking and acting independently from the group when the group's beliefs and values do not align one's own.

Examples abound in which young people played a fundamental role as social activists and change-makers in their countries, communities, schools, neighborhoods and families (Hart, 1992; Youniss et al, 2002). They have affected policy change and influenced broad-based behavioral norms related to a wide range of issues, including education, social health, peace-keeping, and environmental protection (O'Donoghue et al. 2002). As we write this article young people around the world are driving powerful political change movements in countries like Egypt, Syria and Libya.

Benefits of Collective Action

As with youth voice, youth, organizations and communities all benefit from collective action. Youth develop real-world problem solving and collaborative skills deemed critical for workers and citizens in the 21st century. And, as diverse youth help to create the kind of organizations and communities in which they want to engage and contribute, they become more connected to these places, they continue to work with others to improve them, and organizations and communities come to more closely reflect the values and meet the needs of all youth.

Commitment to and learning from experiences in organizations and communities are enhanced when youth and adults share decision making (Innovation Center & National 4-H, 2003; O'Donaghue et al., 2002). For some, it has been shown to increase commitment to school and college (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005). When they work together to grapple with and address environmental, social and political issues, youth and adults learn to analyze social and political power dynamics and to identify, develop and mobilize community resources to solve real-world problems (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2006; Kahn & Westheimer, 2004; Kirshner, 2006; Larson & Hansen, 2005; Pittman et al., 2007; Search Institute, 2005; Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

A shift in focus away from individual outcomes to developing a group's capacity to reach shared goals, what Watts and Flanagan (2007) call "collective human development" (p. 784), may be the greatest benefit of collective action. This includes skills for collaborative goal setting, decision-making, planning and implementation, competencies they often carry into other parts of their lives (Larson et al., 2005; Zeldin, 2004; Zeldin et al., 2007). Youth and adults learn to co-construct ideas through research, dialogue and critical thinking, negotiating the development of individual beliefs and values within, and yet still independent from those of the group (Noguera & Cannella, 2006). Along the way, they build relationships of mutual respect which, in addition to offering emotional support, can open other doors in the community, as adults offer to write college recommendations, connect them with jobs and internships, scholarships, and other opportunities (Zeldin, 2004).

The community benefits, as noted earlier in this paper, when participation builds social trust. And yet social trust is also precursor to participation (Flanagan, 2003). Collective action provides a way for disengaged youth and adults to build trusting relationships within a group while helping to create or shape systems they can trust and in which they want to participate (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2006; Kahn & Westheimer, 2004; Pittman et al., 2007; Search Institute, 2005; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Wheeler, 2007 a&b). Putnam, Feldstein, & Cohen (2003) assert that the social capital built through such endeavors represents "not a comfortable alternative to social conflict, but a way of making controversy productive" (p. 3).

Past research has shown those who are engaged in this way during adolescence are more likely to continue to actively engage throughout youth and adulthood (Colby & Damon, 1992; Haste, 2003, 2004; Kahn & Westheimer, 2003; Pittman et al., 2007; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Youniss & Hart, 2005; Youniss et al., 2002; Youniss & Yates, 1997). As people of all age, cultural and socioeconomic groups come to believe they can help shape organizations, communities and society, and actually have opportunities to do so, these institutions will come to more closely reflect the values and meet the needs of all their members (Sirianni and Friedland, 2001; Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995; Zeldin et al., 2007).

An Agenda to Increase and Advance Youth Engagement

We know there are myriad programmatic and more organic forms of youth engagement as expressed and seen through the inclusive lens of the Rings of Engagement framework. Done well, any form of youth engagement can benefit young people, youth programs, and communities.

We also know that not nearly enough young people, particularly older youth in lower income communities and families, engage in these growth-enhancing programs, opportunities and relationships. We suggest that successful programs and opportunities will be more attractive to and retain young people ages 14 and older when they meet adolescents' natural developmental needs for experiencing increasing levels of autonomy, voice and decision-making authority in ever-broadening spaces and places.

Fortunately, no single organization has to provide all of these opportunities. If young people can find and access a range of different opportunities and relationships throughout the community, over time they can engage in different programs and places to address their changing needs. This scenario depends upon a coordinated system of useful research leading to research-based professional and product development, marketing, technology and other infrastructure systems to support communication, connection and learning.

A comprehensive agenda to promote and support youth engagement might include these five elements.

1. ***Useful research*** to deepen our understanding of the benefits of youth engagement, what it takes to do it well, and obstacles we must overcome to put into practice what we know works. Our work to date suggests the following kinds of research needs:
 - a. Document individual, organization and community outcomes produced by each type of engagement and how they are achieved.
 - b. Learn more about youth who are not participating, particularly older youth from low income families and communities, with a focus on what attracts and keeps them involved.
 - c. Map various pathways to participation and engagement, based on differences among youth and the communities in which they live
 - d. Understand the interests, needs, beliefs, assumptions and perspectives of different stakeholders (including youth, parents, program providers and policymakers); and what it will take for them to actively support youth engagement efforts.
 - e. Learn more about how formal and non-formal out-of-school-time programs *and* informal, non-programmatic (e.g., pick-up basketball, garage talent shows) youth engagement work together to produce positive youth outcomes; and how we can catalyze, support and *integrate* the proliferation of all these opportunities.
2. ***Deepen and broaden the practice of youth engagement*** through the development of useful training, technical assistance, coaching, peer learning, online forums, practitioner and research blogs, and other vehicles for practitioners and other stakeholders to learn from and with each other.

3. **Create effective communication and awareness-raising tools** that translate research into user-friendly, stakeholder-driven products, tools and messages that pique the interest and meet the needs of a variety of audiences.

These tools can be the basis for an integrated awareness raising campaign that can be tailored to meet specific outreach needs. This would include key messages and supporting content directed toward program providers, youth workers, policymakers, youth and parents, helping each group understand how youth engagement can help them achieve goals they care about most.

4. **Build system-level opportunities, resources and technology** that support collaborative training, research, communication and connections across people, programs and communities.

Closing Reflections

Youth engagement is both a means to an end and an end in itself. It is expressed and experienced through various program models, yet it is more than just a method or a tool. It represents a philosophical shift in the way we think about the relationships, roles, assets, power and opportunities that can exist between young people and the adults, programs and communities that surround and include them.

The goal is to ensure that young people are surrounded by multiple, captivating, developmentally-scaffolded opportunities for engagement and leadership in programs and communities. This will require programs and organizations to look for ways to work *with* young people to achieve shared goals, recognizing the value and resources each brings. Youth engagement also requires a personal commitment. Each of us has the opportunity to examine how we engage with youth in our own daily interactions where we work, learn, gather, pray and play. This represents a cultural shift in Western society, to recognize that all people, regardless of age, have strengths to offer and that young people have a right and need to walk alongside us. In the process, we will learn from each other and work together to get it right (Sullivan, 2011).

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The Evolving Role of Youth Workers

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The Evolving Role of Youth Workers

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Abstract: In reviewing the field of youth development, of which youth workers are a part, it is clear it has had a long and complex history that is intertwined with other disciplines. More recently youth workers have experienced a transformation of sorts, with youth programs in the past being seen exclusively as a place to play and have fun, whereas today's expectations include a much broader focus on the overall positive development of young people. This evolution has been heavily influenced by a number of societal changes that have placed increasing demands on youth programs. Today's youth workers are faced with the responsibility to promote a young person's development which often includes supporting academic success and graduation from high school, reducing risk-taking behaviors, increasing positive health attitudes, and more. Youth workers have seen their role change dramatically over the past 20 years with greater demands and increased accountability.

Introduction

The field of youth development, of which youth workers are a part, has a long and complex past that has often intertwined with other disciplines such as psychology, social work, education, and others. Over time, many of these disciplines have changed and evolved in an effort to effectively respond to societal demands. Youth workers are currently experiencing their own similar transformation. Youth programs of the past were often seen exclusively as a place to play and have fun; however, today the expectations for youth workers and programs include the promotion of the overall positive development of the young people within the program.

To understand the evolving role of youth workers one must first consider the varying contexts in which they work and the roles (e.g., youth pastor, corrections professional, nurse, teacher, public health worker, and others) they play within their organizations. The *International Child and Youth Care Consortium* offers a definition that provides at least an initial understanding of the complex, multi-dimensional nature of today's professional child and youth workers:

Professional Child and Youth Care Practice focuses on infants, children, and adolescents, including those with special needs, within the context of the family, the community, and the life span. The developmental-ecological perspective emphasizes the interaction between persons and their physical and social environments, including cultural and political settings. Professional practitioners promote the optimal development of children, youth, and their families in a variety of settings, such as early care and education, community-based child and youth development programs, parent education and family support, school-based programs, community mental health, group homes, residential centers, day and residential treatment, early intervention, home-based care and treatment, psychiatric centers, rehabilitation programs, pediatric health care, and juvenile justice programs. Child and youth care practice includes assessing client and program needs, designing and implementing programs and planned environments, integrating developmental, preventive, and therapeutic requirements into the life space, contributing to the development of knowledge and practice, and participating in systems interventions through direct care, supervision, administration, teaching, research, consultation, and advocacy (National Organization of Child Care Worker Associations, 1992, p. 83).

Given the diversity of the contexts in which they work and the variety of duties they perform, it is clear that the role of the youth worker is complex. For the purposes of this paper we will define a youth worker as anyone who develops/implements places/programs designed to fill the discretionary time of young people with opportunities for socialization and learning (Perkins & Borden, 2001). Young people who participate in these contexts can build important life skills, develop positive youth-adult and peer-peer relationships, and engage in activities that promote their overall positive development (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Lerner, 2004; Perkins & Borden, 2003; Villarruel, Perkins, Borden, & Keith, 2003).

Youth Workers from an Historical Perspective

The role of youth workers can be traced back more than 100 years in the history of the United States. Many youth programs were created in response to two major societal changes. Specifically, the decline in the number of children needed as part of the labor force and the enactment of the compulsory education laws (Halpern, 2002). These changes led to a shift in how children and youth used their time, now splitting their time between the hours spent in school and discretionary time (e.g., time not spent in school) (Halpern, 2002). The increase in discretionary time led to an increase in the number of children and youth on the streets engaged in non-productive activities. The influx of children on the streets was seen as a problem that needed to be addressed. The result was not only new laws (e.g. curfews, loitering), but new ideas regarding how to provide for the needs of children and youth (Halpern, 2002). Together these forces created the need for organized programs, many of which continue to exist today.

One such program, established in 1856, was the first "student" Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) (Young Men's Christian Association: 1800s – 1860s, 2011). Soon this led to the development of a number of "boys' clubs" which began to emerge in the 1860s. The boys' clubs were designed to offer young boys a positive alternative to being on the streets (Boys and Girls Clubs of America, 2011). Other programs were created to address the needs of youth such as the 4-H program, an informal educational program to promote youth development, established between 1890 and 1900 (Iowa 4-H, 2011) and the Girl Scouts of the United States

of America (GSUSA), founded by Juliette Gordon Low in 1912 to promote community service and empowerment of young girls (Girl Scouts, 2011).

Historically young people have had the opportunity to interact with and learn from non-familial adults in their lives through both formal and informal teaching within various contexts (e.g., formal and informal settings). In the United States, adults and youth began to interact in more formalized settings (e.g., school, faith-based settings). This tradition continued with the implementation of youth programs as these depended heavily on adult volunteers to develop and run the programs. This model of volunteer-driven programs for youth continues today, however, societal changes have required many organizations to change the manner in which they now deliver programming including those that have chosen to move their programs to within the school day (e.g., Junior Achievement). Regardless of the model, youth programs offer non-familial adults and youth the opportunity to interact, work together, and learn from one another.

Understanding the Field of Youth Development

By examining the field of youth development, one is able to understand the important role that the youth worker plays. The field of youth development evolved from a variety of disciplines including psychology, sociology, education, and others. The field was further defined by the research on youth resiliency: the ability of youth to withstand the stressors of life by drawing upon personal attributes, affectionate ties, and external support systems. Examination of youth resiliency has provided practitioners with information about the qualities of youth and their environments that buffer them against adversity. The research on resiliency has led practitioners to use this information to promote positive youth development within various settings (Perkins, Borden, Keith, Hoppe-Rooney, & Villarruel, 2003). The research pertaining to youth resilience also has a long and rich history that notes the most common protective factor is the presence of a caring non-parental adult in a young person's life (Rutter 1987; Werner & Smith, 1982).

Youth work practitioners play an important role in a young person's life through their provision and enhancement of programs that offer youth an opportunity to engage in activities that encourage their active involvement in their own development (Walker, Marczak, Blyth, & Borden, 2005); these experiences are essential to their positive development. Lerner and Hertzog (2003) further described the role of community youth development professionals/youth workers noting that:

A community youth development professional is envisioned to be a community builder on behalf of youth development. He or she would identify and integrate the strengths of young people and the assets of communities to create a set of actions that would provide for youth: (1) positive, healthy, and sustained adult-youth relations; (2) skill building opportunities in youth; and (3) opportunities for youth to participate in, and take leadership of, community-based activities by and for youth. The work of community youth development professionals would put young people on a life path marked by the "Five Cs" of positive youth development (Competence, Confidence, Connection, Caring, and Character) that would eventuate in the person becoming an adult making contributions (the "Sixth C" of positive youth development) to self, family, community, and civil society (p. 1).

There is an ever-growing body of literature that supports the role of youth workers in engaging youth and assisting them in their own development as one way to enhance their positive development (Foster-Fishman, Deacon, Nievar and McCann, 2005; Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010; Zeldin, 2004). Shernoff and Vandell (2007) examined youth engagement in a variety of afterschool enrichment programs (e.g., sports and arts) among eighth grade students. They found that youth reported being most engaged in activities that involved both peers and adults, compared to activities involving peers alone.

Caring adults serve as mentors for youth (Hirsch, 2005), demonstrating effective social skills for positive interaction with others and fostering a sense of self-worth (Serido, Borden, & Perkins, 2009). Messias, Fore, McLoughlin, and Parra-Medina (2005) noted that in programs that empower youth, adults “provided encouragement and advice, gave specific guidance and directions, and created opportunities for youth to utilize their own potential as well as reflect on their own actions” (p. 334). However, in a study investigating why youth, particularly youth of color, chose not to participate in youth programs, Borden, et al. (2006) found that a frequently cited reason for lack of participation was a poorer quality relationship with adult staff. Taken together, these findings suggest that youth-adult partnering in programs may form the foundation that will reduce the perceived barriers to continued program participation. It is clear that the role of the youth worker is critical and has the potential to positively influence the lives of young people.

Understanding the Important Role of Youth Workers

The ever-changing role of youth workers requires an understanding of how this work will continue to evolve over the next few years and beyond. Gaining this insight requires addressing the tension that exists between how a profession is generally defined and whether youth workers are categorized as professionals. This particular debate is often at the heart of much heated discussion. There are those who believe that youth workers and the field cannot progress forward without some type of movement toward professionalization and others who believe professionalization is more about status and the requirements of the workforce, the occupational class, and a certain group of people educated and trained to do the work (Lochhead, 2001; Lyon, & Canning, 1990). To simply ignore this tension would be inappropriate as the role of youth workers will be directly influenced by this debate. Far too often, as one administrator reported regarding the qualifications required for youth workers, only “the ability to fog a mirror” (Stuck, 1994, p. 60) was required for employment with his agency. While the role of youth workers has slowly begun to transform and youth workers have begun to be recognized for their contributions, the transition from an all-volunteer basis to a more professionalized structure has been difficult.

The call for professionalization of youth workers has been ongoing since the early 1970s (see Ferguson & Anglin, 1985 for a review) and proponents of professionalization have traditionally cited issues related to the perception of low status, low pay, and limited opportunity for advancement for youth workers (e.g. Beker, 1975; Christiansen, 1996; Lochhead, 2001). Proponents of the professionalization of youth workers contend that increasing pay would likely result in a reduction in the staff turnover rate. Higher salaries and benefits for program staff would provide an incentive to stay in the job longer, increase the number of individuals who choose to work in the field, and reduce the number of employees who leave the field for other professions. A recent survey from the Next Generation Work Coalition titled *Growing the Next Generation of Youth Work Professionals: Workforce Opportunities and Challenges* (Yohalem, Pittman, & Moore, (2006) indicates that

- (1) career advancement in the youth worker field requires job changes indicating limited opportunities for advancement,
- (2) three-fourths of youth workers report that compensation is the primary factor they consider when deciding to leave the field, and
- (3) both youth workers and directors agree that raising wages is the most important factor in advancing the profession (Starr, Gannett, Garza, Goldstein, & Yohalem, 2008).

Staff turnover hovers around 40% annually and youth workers tend to be young and leave the occupation early due to a lack of opportunities for advancement (Halpern, 2002).

Addressing the issue of staff turnover is critical, as the repeated turnover of staff leads to programs with less continuity requiring young people to repeatedly establish new relationships with new youth workers. Thus, one implication of reduced staff turnover for youth workers is that better relationships and bonding are more likely to occur between program staff and program participants. Caring relationships between program staff and youth directly influence youths' decisions to attend programs (Borden, et al. 2006; Rhodes, 2004). In addition, forming bonds with youth can promote developmental benefits. For example, Hirsch and colleagues (2000) found that staff-participant relationships can help develop confidence and self-esteem through role modeling. Indeed, in one program a youth directly lamented staff turnover indicating that all the "good staff" leave (p. 220), referring to "good staff" as those individuals who are able to connect with youth (Hirsch, et al., 2000). Furthermore, staff directly influence the intellectual and emotional climate of a program and therefore impact program quality.

Currently, "low wages and part-time hours driven by tight budgets, along with the limited supply of qualified youth workers, combine to make staff shortages and retention one of the largest continuing challenges for afterschool programs." (Grossman, et al., 2002; p. vi). A comprehensive study of youth program staff showed that only 20% of workers say their organization formally recognizes or rewards participation in training and only 62% indicate that their organization pays for training (Yohalem, et al., 2006). The lack of incentives for training may lie in the fact that there is high staff turnover. Youth workers that do not view their work as a profession may have little motivation to seek additional training in their field, especially if the training comes at their own cost. In addition, employers may feel little need to invest in the professional development of their staff due to historically high rates of staff turnover.

While increasing youth worker compensation and benefits may seem appealing, there are several considerations that must be addressed before attempting such a transition. Feasibility, for example, may be a primary challenge to increasing youth workers' salaries. Where is the additional compensation to come from? Central to this point, Lochhead (2001) cautions that increasing salaries may price youth workers beyond the means of the people that need assistance the most. Indeed, some authors argue that the professionalization of youth workers may serve only to estrange youth workers from the populations that they work with through changes in status and workforce specialization (Lochhead, 2001; Lyon, & Canning, 1990).

Furthermore, even if youth workers received increased training, education, and commensurate salaries, there still remains limited opportunity for career advancement for youth workers. These factors make arguments about quality of care and staff turnover a moot point since youth workers are still likely to leave the field to advance their careers. The structure of the current youth worker system would have to be remodeled to provide such an advancement structure. The results of such a structural change could have profound implications for the

quality of care that children and youth receive. For example, currently the large majority (81%) of youth workers are satisfied with their jobs and most (84%) plan to continue to work with youth for the next five years (Evans & Sicafuse, 2009). Presently, most youth workers are employed full time (73%) and part-time workers report levels of job satisfaction similar to workers who are employed full time (Evans & Sicafuse, 2009; Yohalem, & Pittman, 2006). Increasing the level of compensation that youth workers receive may open the door for reduced quality of care by attracting employees who place a greater priority on compensation than on the children and youth they work with. Given the level of job satisfaction under the current system and the quality of care provided by current youth workers, there may be little incentive to further professionalize the field. Moreover, a recent trend toward professionalization of youth workers has led to fewer volunteers and part-time workers compared to paid full-time employees. Relying on volunteers and part-time employees has the advantage of providing a more diverse workforce of youth workers who possess a variety of different skills and knowledge that can be passed on to youth (Halpern, 2002). In this view, high staff turnover may not be considered a negative aspect of the current system since youth can take advantage of being exposed to a variety of caring adults.

Professional Practice

The professionalization of the youth worker role can be distinguished from the more complex issue of the nature of the youth worker profession. While debate exists regarding the professionalization of the field, a separate question exists, namely, what does it actually mean for a youth worker to be a professional? Hahn and Raley (1998) suggest that a professional has "a monopoly of judgment over their clients based on knowledge and expertise" (p. 391). Accordingly, the youth worker professional maintains a privileged position with youth that encompasses responsibilities such as trust, loyalty, and confidentiality as a result of their expertise and the relationship that they have developed with the youth. Consistent with this notion, Sercombe (2010a), building from the work of Koehn (1994), suggests that a professional is based on a relationship with clients, in this case youth, wherein the youth worker makes a commitment to the well-being of youth. The youth work practitioner can be seen as a partner to youth, who from their position of experience and expertise, facilitates transformations in youth by improving and enriching their lives. The youth worker cultivates an environment of trust which permits youth to be vulnerable (Sercombe, 2010b). As a result of this vulnerability, it is a major responsibility of youth workers to act in the best interests of the youth, regardless of the interests of other clients such as funders or stakeholders. Thus, youth workers not only serve in an instructional capacity to youth, but also serve as a confidante, ally, and advocate for youth.

The effort and commitment to youth that it takes to be a successful youth worker is no small task. Individuals who are attracted to this line of work must have an intrinsic want to improve the lives of young people. This desire is likely the reason that the youth worker field has historically consisted of many volunteers who are not in it for the money but rather for the wish to serve youth. However, more must be done in the youth worker field to recruit and retain quality youth work practitioners. Perhaps Walker (2002) framed the situation best: "Passion brings people to youth work, but it takes more than passion to keep them there" (p. 382). One such strategy that moves beyond providing material incentive is the development of youth worker culture (Hahn & Raley, 1998). In many fields an occupational culture exists that facilitates commitment to the field itself. Often commitment to the field is the result of a self-identification of the individual to the occupation. One such example is the military. In a study of West Point cadets, Franke (2000) found that the training and education received by cadets

served to increase their military identity. That is, greater exposure to military training at the academy increased the degree to which they self-identified with the military. Critically, greater military identity was associated with greater commitment to the military as a professional career. Similarly, perhaps a greater research focus could be allocated toward understanding those factors that increase occupational self-identification to create a youth worker culture centered on commitment to the profession and subsequently to the youth they serve.

Future Trends in the Field

Training and Education

Youth do not ubiquitously benefit from participating in youth programs. Indeed, there is a relation between the positive benefits youth obtain from program participation and the quality of the program. Essentially, youth benefit from high quality programs and may not benefit from programs that are lower in quality. (e.g. Catalano, Berglund, Ryna, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 1998; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Vandell & Pierce, 2001). Much research implicates the role of the youth worker in creating a high quality program and the training and education of youth workers is essential for delivering programs that maximize benefits to youth (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000; Pierce, Hamm, & Vandell, 1999). Thus, one trend that will be observed within the youth worker field is an increase in their training and education. One such advancement may come in the form of training certificates much like the CASE program implemented at the University of California, Irvine (Hinga & Mahoney, 2010). The CASE program consists of university-level courses and fieldwork aimed at educating youth program educators on out-of-school learning, human development, multicultural education, developing out-of-school curricula, and other courses in teaching math, arts, and coaching sports. College students and current youth workers can complete the program to obtain a certificate in afterschool education.

Professional Development that Transcends Programs

Another example of advanced training that is focused specifically on improving the quality of programming for adolescents is the Moving Ahead curriculum (Huebner, Walker, & McFarland, 2003). In many youth programs the extent of training is focused solely on the goals or mission of the program. This structure creates an idiosyncratic system of training wherein youth worker training is specific to the objectives of the program. The Moving Ahead curriculum represents an integration of research, theory, and practice developed to help youth workers critically reflect on their work in an effort to improve program quality. This training curriculum transcends the idiosyncratic nature of typical program training by incorporating a framework based on a fundamental understanding of the nature of youth work. Participants are engaged in shared learning processes and lessons are constructed around the following question: "Here is a principle supported by research and practice. If you accept this principle as valuable, what does it mean for the way you work?" (Huebner, et al., 2003; p. 215). Programs such as the ones described above will be critical in advancing the future of the field and providing high quality programming for youth.

Compensation

Along with increases in training and education, the compensation that youth workers receive will also increase. This increase will likely not be dramatic; indeed the mismatch between youth workers' compensation and their education and previous work experience will likely persist. Yohalem, Pittman, and Edwards (2010) however suggest that small increases in wages may make a difference in the staff turnover. In addition to small increases in wages, more creative methods of addressing compensation concerns may also follow including loan forgiveness,

education stipends, credit union access, and financial advising to name a few (Yohalem, et al., 2010).

In total, with the current trends toward increased training, education, and compensation for youth workers it would appear that the overall trend toward the professionalization of the youth worker field will continue.

Conclusions

The field of youth work has a long and rich history that has been impacted by societal changes that have been shaped by the needs of children, youth, and families. As a result of the changing field of youth development, the role of the youth worker has also changed. Today's youth work practitioners reside in a diverse set of fields and settings, activities, and enterprises. A troublesome reality for the youth worker is the mismatch in compensation relative to training, education, and experience. One way to ameliorate this discrepancy is the professionalization of the field. Professionalization centers on increasing the compensation, status, and benefits of the youth worker as well as the structure of the youth worker field. Barriers to professionalization include the feasibility of such a structural change as well as the limited financial capacity of the field itself. Nonetheless, as time goes on the movement toward professionalization will likely continue and with it further changes in the role of the youth worker. In today's society the needs of youth are focused on the development of positive characteristics. As we move forward, new avenues of youth development may manifest. What these avenues will consist of only the future can tell. However, given the historically adaptive role of the youth worker, these challenges and opportunities should be met with optimism.

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Voluntary Youth-Serving Organizations: Responding to the Needs of Young People and Society in the Last Century

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Voluntary Youth-Serving Organizations: Responding to the Needs of Young People and Society in the Last Century

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Abstract: As many national youth-serving organizations have either celebrated their 100th anniversaries or are approaching their centennials, we take a step back to celebrate these organizations' accomplishments, but also to examine how youth organizations have responded positively to the youth development philosophy and approach to programming. The focus of this paper is on those organizations in which participation by youth is voluntary.

Voluntary Youth-Serving Organizations: How Have They Responded to the Needs of Young People and Society in the Last Century?

In 2011 many national youth-serving organizations have either celebrated their 100th anniversaries or are approaching their centennials. As we celebrate these organizations' accomplishments, we take note that youth organizations formed in the early part of the 20th century have responded positively to the evolving concept of youth development as a philosophy and way of working in their programs. The large national youth-serving organizations can be characterized as "positive youth development agents" that rely on nonformal educational strategies to offer a broad variety of programs and supports for young people. They build upon key competencies including health, personal, creative/cognitive, vocational, citizenship, and participation (Pittman, 1991). The strategies used to deliver programs are consistent across youth organizations and include the use of small groups, symbols of membership, flexible grouping practices, clear structure, and opportunities for challenge and reward in order to create a sense of achievement (Pittman, 1991).

This article focuses on those national youth-serving organizations that involve voluntary participation by young people ages 5-24 and that have been in existence for a minimum of 50 years. We also focus on those organizations that offer primarily nonformal and informal educational opportunities for youth. Nonformal education is "any organized, systematic,

educational activity carried on outside of the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population” (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974). Coombs and Ahmed define informal education as “the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes, and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment.” Nonformal, informal, and formal education are not necessarily separate learning approaches, but can be considered the predominant learning approaches and often intersect within youth-serving organizations (La Belle, 1982).

The promotion of a youth development perspective has been incubated within these national youth-serving organizations (Costello, Toles, Spielberger, & Wynn, 2000). We examine how these organizations have evolved over time, whether they experienced a shift from their original mission, and whether a focus on positive youth development, defined as “an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances youths' strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths” (FindYouthInfo Positive Youth Development, 2011) has always been a significant focus of their mission.

Characteristics of National Youth-Serving Organizations

The oldest of the youth-serving organizations, including 4-H, Boy Scouts, the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), and the Y (formerly known as the Young Men’s Christian Association) were established in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century at about the same time as the creation of the public school system (Costello, Toles, Spielberger, & Wynn, 2000). This was the same period in history in which youth were viewed as problems rather than as assets and when psychologist G. Stanley Hall’s theory of adolescence as a period of “storm and stress” (Hall, 1904) influenced many institutions and the general public.

At the turn of the century, many of the youth organizations were focused on addressing youth in crisis-poverty, homelessness, entry into the judicial system, post-war, etc. However, as seen in Table 1, many of the youth-serving organizations also focused on meeting the developmental needs of young people through skills training, creating educational opportunities and jobs. At the present time, nearly all of the current mission statements now include terms such as “potential,” “build” and “inspire.” In an assessment of mission statements of major national youth-serving organizations, Pittman and Wright (1991) identified that four of the following five competencies were common across these organizations:

- health and physical competence;
- personal and social competence;
- cognitive creative competence;
- vocational competence; and
- citizenship competence.

The voluntary nature of these organizations indicates that they must be of interest to and relevant for the youth that they target. Those organizations that have been successful offer choice and emphasize a sense of mastery and independence (Costello, Toles, Spielberger, & Wynn, 2000).

Table 1
Emerging Articulation of Youth Development

Organization	Original Purpose	Current Mission	History	Other
4-H (4-H National Headquarters, 2011)	To teach youth to understand and appreciate rural life.	4-H seeks to promote positive youth development, facilitate learning and engage youth in the work of their community through the Cooperative Extension Service to enhance the quality of life.	Founded between 1890 and 1900. With passage of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, county agents and leaders organized 4-H clubs. 4-H is a public-private partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the land grant universities' Cooperative Extension System, and the National 4-H Council.	The term "4-H" was first used in a 1918 federal publication. The name was adopted formally in 1924.
Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (Big Brothers Big Sisters About Us, 2011)	Provide support for troubled boys moving through the court system.	To provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported one-to-one relationships that change their lives for the better, forever.	Founded in 1904 by a court clerk, Ernest Coulter, who saw many boys coming through the courtroom and recognized that caring adults could help support these troubled youth. Big Brothers Association and Big Sisters International merged in 1977.	Currently operates in all 50 states and 12 countries. Big Brothers Big Sisters International was founded in 1998.
Boy Scouts of America (Costello, et al., 2000).	Original mission was focused on training boys to be self-sufficient and to provide for themselves.	To provide an educational program for boys and young adults to build character, to train in the responsibilities of participating citizenship, and to develop personal fitness (Boy Scouts of America, 2011).	Founded in 1908 by Robert S. Baden Powell in England. Was incorporated as the Boy Scouts of America in 1910.	Currently have more than 250 million youth participating (BSA History, 2011)

Organization	Original Purpose	Current Mission	History	Other
Boys and Girls Clubs of America (Boys and Girls Clubs of America, 2011)	To serve poor and immigrant children and youth in large urban centers (Witt, 2005).	To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.	The first boys club was organized in Hartford, Connecticut in 1860. Several clubs federated and became the Boys Clubs of America in 1931. The charter was amended by Congress in 1990 to include girls and became the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.	Character development has been an important part of the mission of BGCA since its founding.
Camp Fire USA (Camp Fire USA, 2011)	Originally intended to provide for girls what Boy Scouts provided for boys (Witt, 2005).	Camp Fire USA builds caring, confident youth and future leaders.	Founded by Luther and Charlotte Gulick in 1910.	The organization started as "Camp Fire Girls" and became co-educational in 1975.
Catholic Charities (Catholic Charities USA, 2011)	Focused on charitable ministries for the poor.	Focus on reducing poverty, supporting families, and empowering communities.	Founded in 1910 by Catholic University of America. Expanded reach and currently serves over 9 million people.	Focuses on advocacy, networking, national voice, financial support and leadership and disaster response.
Girl Scouts of the United States of America (Girl Scout History, 2011)	The original mission was to "train girls to take their rightful places in life, first as good women, then as good citizens, wives and mothers." (Levey & Degenhardt, 2002)	To build girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place.	Founded in 1912 by Juliette Gordon Low and incorporated in 1915.	Has a membership of 3.2 million girls and adults today.

Organization	Original Purpose	Current Mission	History	Other
Girls Incorporated (Girls Inc. The Early Years, 2011)	To serve needs of rural girls and women.	Girls Incorporated is a nonprofit organization that inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold SM through a network of local organizations in the United States and Canada.	First affiliate formed in 1864 in Waterbury, Connecticut. First formed to meet needs of rural girls and women who moved to urban areas for jobs in textile mills and factories. In 1945, formed into Girls Clubs of America.	Programming in early days focused on homemaking skills and recreation. The original focus was maintained through the 1960s. In 1974, they reexamined their original mission. Name was changed to Girls Incorporated in 1990.
National Urban League (National Urban League, 2011)	Focus on educational and employment opportunities for African Americans.	The mission of the Urban League movement is to enable African Americans to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power and civil rights.	Founded in 1911 as the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes. The name was shortened to National Urban League in 1920. Began by counseling southern Black migrants, training Black social workers and focusing on educational and employment opportunities for blacks.	Have a youth development framework and guide that is used by affiliates during the out-of-school time hours in three program areas: Intellectual, social, and physical/relational.
Save the Children USA (Save the Children USA, 2011)	Focus on immediate needs (families in rural Appalachia struggling to survive after the Great Depression).	To create lasting, positive change in the lives of children in need in the United States and around the world.	Modeled after British organization created to serve starving children after World War I. Created in 1932 in the U.S. Initial focus was on serving children and families in Appalachia.	Focus on early childhood education, literacy, physical activity, and nutrition.

Organization	Original Purpose	Current Mission	History	Other
The Salvation Army (Salvation Army The History, 2011)	Focus on the poor and homeless.	An evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination.	William Booth, a minister, founded the Salvation Army in 1865. He stopped preaching in church and focused on the poor and homeless. The organization was referred to as the Christian Mission until 1878.	Operates in 106 countries.
Volunteers of America (Volunteers of America Our History, 2011)	Focus on housing for individuals living in poverty.	A ministry of service that includes nearly 16,000 paid, professional employees dedicated to helping those in need rebuild their lives and reach their full potential.	Founded in 1896 by Ballington and Maud Booth. In the early part of the 20 th century, Volunteers of America focused on tenement districts and focused on providing opportunities for people living in poverty, including summer camps.	One of their current mission areas is to focus on services for disadvantaged and disconnected children and youth.
YMCA (Costello, et al., 2000)	Original mission: to create a club for young working men. Focused on Bible study and prayer in England. In the U.S., was originally focused on providing a home away from home for sailors and merchants (The Y: Yesterday, today, tomorrow for good, 2011)	To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all.	Founded in 1844 in England. Brought to North America in 1851.	Has a national framework; each branch is autonomous. Now known as "the Y."

Organization	Original Purpose	Current Mission	History	Other
YWCA (YWCA, 2011)	Original mission: to provide for young working women.	Current mission is YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.	Founded in 1877.	Independent from the YMCA.

New Voices

The prevailing notion of adolescence for most of the last century was one of “storm and stress,” as posited by theorists including G. Stanley Hall, Anna Freud, and Erik Erikson (Lerner, 2007). It was not until the 1960s and 1970s, that researchers and theorists began to consider “healthy” adolescent development (Lerner, 2007). In 1973, Gisela Konopka identified eight fundamental requirements for healthy adolescent development. These included: (1) participate as a responsible member of society; (2) gain experience in decision making; (3) have a sense of belonging; (4) have the opportunity to reflect on oneself in relationship to others; (5) formulate a value system; (6) try out different roles; (7) develop a sense of accountability; and (8) cultivate a capacity to enjoy life.

Key Reports

Two key reports produced in the late eighties, *The Forgotten Half* and *A Matter of Time*, described what kinds of youth outcomes were desirable to produce as well as the community supports that were needed to achieve these outcomes (William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship, 1988; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989, January). In 1994, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development issued a pivotal wake-up call noting that the three institutions that once met adolescents’ needs (families, schools, and community organizations) were “slow to adapt to new social realities.” (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1994, April). These “social realities” included strained capacity of parents and caregivers, a societal demand for highly skilled workers prepared to compete in the global workplace, poverty, crime, and other societal ills. At that time, the Carnegie Council commented on the important role that youth organizations can play in the lives of young people but urged programs to do much more to promote positive youth development, especially for disadvantaged youth. These organizations are often challenged by lack of relevance to diverse audiences and older youth, lack of financial resources, and difficulty in recruiting and preparing paid and volunteer adult leaders. The Carnegie Council called for programs to address the following “universal requirements of adolescents:” (1) Health and physical well-being; (2) personal and social competence; (3) cognitive and educational competence; (4) preparation for work; and (5) leadership and citizenship.

These reports were significant as they called for the preparation of youth to achieve these outcomes rather than the prevention or intervention of problems (Pittman & Irby, 2008). In the decade following the release of these reports, Pittman and Irby observe that there has been “an

increased acceptance of youth development as a broad goal requiring intentional monitoring and intervention.”

Shifting Paradigms

The major themes of the field of positive youth development were defined in the mid- to late-90s and it took approximately a decade to give these themes the name positive youth development. The 1990s were a period of “shifting paradigms,” according to Pittman and Irby and as such, youth-serving organizations changed course as well. This paradigm shift includes six assertions:

- (1) moving beyond prevention to promotion of skills, confidence, character, connection to family, peers, and community;
- (2) moving beyond quick fixes and strengthening engagement of youth and adults in the developmental process;
- (3) moving beyond schools to include families, neighborhoods, community organizations, the workplace and service agencies;
- (4) moving beyond coordination to creating a vision;
- (5) moving beyond labeling of youth as “at risk;” and
- (6) viewing youth not as recipients of services but as contributors to their own development (Pittman & Irby, 2008).

In the mid-1990s, a group of researchers and practitioners described the five competencies or “C’s” that could prepare youth for a successful transition to adulthood. These include: Competence, the ability to act effectively in a number of different contexts such as school and work; Confidence, an internal, overall sense of worth; Connection, positive bonds with others and institutions; Character, a sense of internalized values; and Caring, a sense of empathy and sympathy for others. A sixth C, Contribution, giving back to one’s community through service, was added later (Lerner, 2007).

The Blue Book

In 2002, the National Academies of Science issued a landmark consensus study that outlined eight features of positive developmental settings. These include: physical and psychological safety; appropriate structure; supportive relationships; opportunities to belong; positive social norms; support for efficacy and mattering; and opportunities for skill building (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002). While these characteristics are drawn from theory and research on all formal and informal settings with which youth may interact, the articulation of these characteristics has aided youth-serving organizations in moving forward with assessments of program quality and how youth perceive these characteristics in their interactions with programs. This emphasis on quality has implications for point-of-service quality as well as for organizational structures that support quality.

Youth Organizations’ Response to Societal Changes

Youth-serving organizations have responded to “social realities” by shifting programmatic content from a focus on “survival skills” to a focus on “life skills” and preparing youth for successful transitions to adulthood. They are also reaching out to populations of youth that may not have been traditionally engaged or served by their organizations. Some youth-serving organizations were established as recreation-focused and have been shifting their missions to nonformal education and workforce preparation. One example of how 4-H is addressing the

societal demand for a highly skilled workforce is through its national Science initiative. In particular, a 4-H Science in Urban Communities initiative has been identifying promising and best practices in urban science including programming, partnerships, resource development and staffing (4-H Science in Urban Communities, 2011).

Many national youth organizations are challenged to meet the needs of middle-school and high-school aged youth. As adolescents develop, their interests and needs change. Programs for older youth need to provide educational programs that prepare youth to navigate across multiple cultural settings; opportunities to mentor younger youth; meaningful leadership roles; and programs that help them focus on educational and career goals. Youth-serving organizations are also addressing meeting the needs of underserved populations. For many of the organizations in Table 1, such as Catholic Charities, National Urban League, and Save the Children, this has been part of their focus from their inception.

Other youth-serving organizations have changed and adapted their missions over time to address the needs of youth who might not traditionally be engaged in their programs, either because of lack of interest or lack of access. For example, Girls Inc., founded in 1864 as Girls Club, has addressed the changing needs of girls in response to social changes in the U.S. that impacted girls' perceptions of who they were and who they could become. This is evident in the evolution of the mission and the types of programming offered to girls. The mission statement has evolved over the past 147 years from one that broadly sought "to better conditions for working girls" to a focus on homemaking, then intellect, character development, and to what is now a succinct focus on a holistic mission of "inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and bold". These changes are connected to social movements that helped advance women's rights and broaden perceptions of what girlhood and womanhood meant related to family, career, and social roles.

Similarly, Girl Scouts of the USA, founded in 1912 by Juliette Gordon Low, before women had the right to vote in the United States, was intended to present girls with new opportunities to develop in ways that were not available otherwise in society. Girl leadership development has been at the heart of Girl Scouting since its founding, when Low recognized that developing girls' leadership abilities was critical for ensuring they would be the change-makers of the future. The mission statement of Girl Scouting has evolved over the past 100 years from one that proclaimed to help girls to become "good citizens" to one that intentionally focuses on the qualities and skills that develop girl leadership in the 21st century: "Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place."

Funding Support as Key to Responsiveness

National youth-serving organizations operate with a significant amount of autonomy and flexibility (Costello, et al., 2000). Funding often comes from diverse sources including public and private and most organizations allow their local affiliates a substantial amount of independence. Most rely heavily on volunteers because of limited resources which forces them to be flexible.

While national youth-serving organizations are accustomed to operating on shoestring budgets (Newman, Smith, & Murphy, 2000), several societal factors have impacted the public's investment in youth development. These include: the "devaluation of adolescents," a lack of consensus on youth development, a lack of integrated structure for youth services, and lack of sufficient and protected funding (Newman, et al., 2000).

More than a decade ago, Quinn (1999) reflected that youth-serving organizations faced four challenges related to funding: diversity, instability, inadequacy and inequity. Diversity was defined as the different funding patterns for different types of youth organizations. Instability related to the unstable funding base where there was no major permanent public funding stream and organizations faced the risks of changes from political winds and/or a new administration. Public support for youth organizations in the late 1980's and early 1990's came from "discretionary" grant programs. Inadequacy as a challenge was due to youth development organizations competing with one another for a slice of the relatively small public support funding pie especially when compared to youth development programs in Britain, Norway and Sweden which received regular financial public support (Sherraden, 1992). Inequity referred to the access of service delivery based upon local programs' ability to solicit funds creating a disparity between poor and affluent communities. Quinn (1999) concluded that major public funding cutbacks in human services would cause youth organizations to diversify their funding sources, compete harder for available grant dollars, increase efforts to solicit contributions from individuals and corporations, and develop strategies for earning income.

Leonard Stern's exploratory study (1992) surveyed funding streams for youth-serving organizations. Categories included federal, state and local government, United Way, fees (service/program/membership), foundations (national, community, corporation, other), donations (corporate and individual), and fund-raising (events, product/program sales). Newman and his colleagues (2000) listed in their essay regarding the cost and financing of youth development four general sources: private (families and individuals); philanthropy; local, state and federal governments; and the business community.

National youth-serving organizations have employed various strategies to diversify funding sources. Some strategies focus on program accountability, messaging, and board accountability. Campbell and Menezes (2010) outline "Four Pillars of Growth for Youth-Serving Non-Profits to be:

- (1) create strategic operating plans that allow for organizations to be "opportunistic" and build capabilities in data systems, evaluation, advocacy, and staff capacity,
- (2) demonstrate clear programmatic results,
- (3) market purposefully to specific funders to influence and shape funding streams with governmental funders and build relationships with private funders through targeted messaging and
- (4) actively engaging board members, strengthening their commitment, leveraging skills and expertise, and casting a wider net for resources.

Capacity building is a theme outlined as well in Silloway's (2010) strategy brief with approaches that assist in building accurate overhead rates into contracts and grants, accessing funding to support capacity building, pursuing technical assistance and promoting leveraging of administrative resources.

Diversification of funding by national youth-serving organizations includes Boys and Girls Clubs' pursuit and receipt of federal dollars with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). Land-grant extension systems have turned to program development fees for 4-H and increasing expectation to garner support through public and private grant dollars for programming. Girl Scout councils that maintain their cookie product sales have had to increase prices while also soliciting programming support through grants and relationships with

women in science organizations. The latest recession has led to program fees to be charged and social enterprise activities to generate new revenue and fill budget gaps. Sliding-scale fees have been implemented as well as charging fees for transportation. Charging fees can help with voluntary organizations' enrollment commitment. Youth-serving organizations' diversified funding streams now include a mix of public and private dollars.

Diversification can lead to charges that youth-serving organizations suffer mission drift and are chasing the dollars. These transitions may be perceived by clientele, program staff and former participants as deviating from serving the best interests of youth, especially as youth-serving organizations seek out corporate sponsorship, celebrity spokespersons, and licensing arrangements. In addition, individuals are concerned that funding diversification leads to a possible loss of youth voice and engagement and that youth participants are being exploited to build the messaging for targeted funders.

Volunteers and the Youth Work Profession

Over the past 100 years, the nature of volunteerism has changed significantly as has the nature of the youth work profession. The early part of the last century was characterized by progressive social reform in which the middle class became increasingly aware of and concerned by the conditions in which the poor were living (Ellis & Campbell, 2005). At the turn of the last century, concern for children's welfare was an issue that attracted many volunteers to organizations such as the Big Brothers Association. Juvenile courts were also staffed by volunteers. At that time in history, rural volunteers were drawn to youth programs, including the early precursors of 4-H: demonstration, corn, and canning clubs (Ellis & Campbell, 2005). Similarly, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Camp Fire Girls, all established in the U.S. at the turn of the century, drew on volunteers to lead planning bodies and to run local groups (Ellis & Campbell, 2005).

Along with the articulation of positive youth development as a field has come the professionalization of youth work. While many of the youth-serving organizations in Table 1 rely significantly on volunteers, these organizations, including Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4-H, Camp Fire USA, the Y and YWCA have sought to strengthen their professional development systems for their workforce over the past 20 years (Johnston Nicholson, Houchin, & Stegall, 2004). Early efforts were limited in their focus, but there have been several significant initiatives that have served to build consensus on essential competencies for youth work practice (Quinn, 2004).

Conclusion

National youth-serving organizations have responded encouragingly to the changing needs of youth and have been incorporating youth development as a philosophy into their programming. As we mentioned in this paper, the words "healthy" adolescent development did not come into the common vernacular until the 1960s. Since then, several important reports and studies have called for an increased engagement and responsiveness on the part of these youth organizations to address critical social realities of young people. As shown in Table 1, youth-serving organizations have been meeting the challenge by shifting their original purpose or mission to one that is focused on developing life skills, creating sustainable change, and helping youth transition successfully into adulthood.

As these voluntary youth-serving organizations move into the next 100 years of serving youth and their families, there will be a number of different societal factors and challenges that they

will need to address and respond to. For example, Stern's (1992) recommendation and the strategies employed to target funders ought to be reconsidered. He raised the question of what impact funders' priorities have on youth-serving organizations. "Do they follow the dollar or do they simply play the funder's game to keep working at the mission they have established?" According to Stern, (1992) agencies that could demonstrate their effectiveness would survive and prosper. The study's recommendations included:

- 1) increased, and consolidated government support inclusive of possible taxation for youth development, specific legislation for Young Americans, support for a cadre of trained youth development workers, and youth development block grants;
- 2) principles, guidelines and standards for youth serving organizations;
- 3) a level playing field for fundraising competition;
- 4) a national non-governmental center for youth development; and
- 5) accountability measures and data.

As we look at the changing role of national youth-serving organizations, funding diversification may keep youth-serving organizations alive, yet leave youth neither engaged nor served. Perhaps it is time to dust off and revisit the recommendations for funding, and review them in the light of building capacity and competency of youth-serving organizations to ensure program quality and access for all youth.

Another significant societal challenge that youth-serving organizations will need to address is the fact that youth are taking much longer than in past generations to transition into a self-sufficient adulthood. In the 1950s, for instance, it was normative for young people to leave home at an early age. The longer transition to adulthood that youth are finding themselves in now puts an added strain on families as well as those institutions that support youth (Settersten & Ray, 2010). This may lead some youth-serving organizations to reconsider their membership age rules and/or consider educational and career pathways for those youth who age out of the organization (e.g., Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4-H, etc.).

In sum, national youth-serving organizations have a long and proud history serving youth and their families. As rapidly as society is changing because of advances in technology and other "social realities," youth-serving organizations will need to balance the "traditional" spirit and unique cultures of their organizations and at the same time, meet these new realities with nimbleness and compassion.

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New Horizons: Understanding the Processes and Practices of Youth Development

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Abstract: This article presents new horizon for research on youth development by focusing on the challenges youth face in learning teamwork and in coming to terms with diversity. These are both essential competencies for navigating the “real world” of the 21st century. We examine how youth experience these challenges within programs; also how they present second-order challenges to practitioners. The underlying message of this article is that it is essential for researchers to see programs from the point of view of the people in them. Researchers have learned quite a bit of what can be learned from arm’s length: that programs can make a difference in youths’ lives and that certain features of settings are associated with these changes. To go further, researchers need to work side-by-side with practitioners and youth to understand their complex worlds as they experience them.

Introduction

We know a lot about youth development, and we know very little. We know that youth programs can change young people’s lives. Yet we know little about how these transformations actually occur. We know that programs are most effective when they create positive relationships for youth and engage them in challenging, authentic activities (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Mahoney, Vandell, Simpkins, & Zarrett, 2009). Yet we know little about how to reliably

create these conditions across programs, different groups of staff, and youth from diverse backgrounds.

What we – at least those of us who are researchers – know little about is what happens inside programs. What are the developmental processes through which youth change? How do front line staff best support these processes? Expert youth practitioners have a rich fund of practical wisdom on these questions. Yet our field has not yet found a way to capture and codify this expertise in ways that can be evaluated or easily passed on to the next generation of practitioners.

To take on this agenda, it is essential to recognize that what happens in programs (as in life, more generally) is highly complex, in ways that often defy simplification. In the daily life of programs many things are happening at multiple levels at once. Everyone brings to the program their own goals, values, and prior experiences. People and events both inside and outside the program shape what happens.

At the extreme, this complexity can create contradictions, double-traps, and Catch-22s (Larson, 2011b). To take one example, we know that effective programs empower youth: they engage them as active participants. This is supported by dozens of studies (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010). It seems simple enough. Yet research also shows that numerous well-meaning efforts to empower youth have led to train wrecks. Successfully empowering youth requires navigating a set of hidden pitfalls, unpacking assumptions, making numerous mid-course corrections, and articulating a logic model that takes these numerous complexities into account (Camino, 2005; Larson & Angus, 2011).

We cannot expect research to provide easy answers. The slow and qualified success of decades of well-funded research in education is a cautionary tale. Humility is needed. To understand the processes and practices in programs, researchers should embrace complexity. An important priority should be systematic, descriptive research aimed at better understanding these complexities, especially as they are experienced by practitioners and youth. Description, of course, is a critical early stage in any field.

We argue, here, for an approach to understanding complexity that includes descriptive research on *the challenges encountered by program staff*. Within “challenges” we include problems, barriers, obstacles, tasks, and dilemmas – which are a frequent focus of applied research. Identifying and analyzing these challenges provides a valuable entry point for further research on effective practice, as well as for training practitioners (Ericsson, 2006; Larson & Walker, 2010).

Before discussing practitioners’ challenges, however, we are going to discuss *the challenges and problems experienced by youth in programs*. Understanding youth’s challenges is important for similar reasons. Eminent scholars from Charles Darwin to Herbert Simon have stressed the importance of describing the complexities of the “problems” an organism encounters as a key to understanding its development. Indeed, the real-world skills that programs want youth to develop – responsibility, teamwork, agency, leadership, emotional maturity, etc. – are skills for dealing with difficult, often knotty problems.

Another reason to study the challenges faced by youth is that researchers – and society in general – so *dramatically under-appreciate how difficult these challenges are*. It is no wonder adolescents get so little respect. In the field of developmental psychology, for example, scholars

marvel at the genius of toddlers, while seeing teens as cognitive underachievers (Kuhn, 2009). They fail to apprehend the profound complexity of the developmental tasks youth face.

To prepare for adulthood, young people must address abstract, multi-layered puzzles for which there is no master guidebook. Many of these puzzles have been around for a long time: figuring out how to work in a team, learning to manage the peculiar dynamics of emotions. At the same time, the adult world that youth must enter is increasingly heterogeneous, fluid, and disorderly. Youth must find their way into opaque and changing labor markets and must navigate diverse cultural values and meaning systems (Larson, 2011b).

We are going to describe this horizon for research on youth processes and staff practices by using two examples: the challenges youth face in learning teamwork and in coming to terms with cultural diversity. These are both essential competencies for navigating the “real world” of the 21st century. We begin by examining how youth experience these challenges within programs, then examine the second-order challenges that practitioners face in facilitating youths’ developmental processes.

The Developmental Challenges Faced by Youth

Teamwork

Let’s start with the puzzles youth face in learning to collaborate with others. This is a vital skill set for adulthood, one that has become increasingly important in the modern world (Parker, Ninomiya, & Cogan, 1999). Many adults aren’t very good at it. The skill set entailed is so unwieldy that school curricula avoid it.

Many youth programs fill the void left by schools, and provide opportunities to learn teamwork skills. But to do it well, our field needs to understand the difficult array of problems that youth encounter in working with others. Some were described by Blanca, a 14-year old in a program in which participants were trying to put together a magazine for the first time:

We had a deadline and everything. We came up with a plan a couple weeks ago and we’re like, “OK, this is when this is gonna be due, this is when the first draft is due, this is when the last paper is due, this is when the picture is due, and and this is when we’re gonna have everything go to the printer people that are gonna make our magazine.”

So far, so good! But the group hit a set of snags familiar to most of us who work in teams:

A lot of things came up; a lot of people weren’t sure about what their story was gonna be. People slack off and they’re not doing what they’re supposed to be doing. Some people are doing great and they’re doing everything they’re supposed to be. [But some youth said] “Oh, I had homework that came up and that was a little bit more important to me.” A lot of people were like, “I changed my story at the last minute so I couldn’t get any quotes from anybody.”

Teamwork breaks down into an almost classical set of interpersonal puzzles. The full set is likely to include how to deal, not only with slackers, but know-it-alls, whiners, control freaks – and one’s *own* conceits – among other things. Each represents a set of tough problems involving complex and abstract dynamics between people.

These interpersonal puzzles, in turn, start to show the skills youth need to learn. Exploratory studies suggest that under favorable conditions (which we discuss later) youth develop skills for effective communication, reciprocal exchanges, finding common ground, self-assertion, and constructing shared rules that facilitate collaboration (Angus, 2008; Larson, 2007).

Charting these different challenges also begins to suggest the *processes* through which young people acquire teamwork skills. We found that teens in programs often learned teamwork through reasoned trial and error. They try strategies and then adapt them as problems arise. For example, after Blanca's group encountered the problems with their magazine, she reported:

So yesterday we sat down and we're like, "OK, let's look at this realistically. We see how much fun we can have with this. So let's get everyone back on track." So we fixed the calendar and we made it work. Now it's really reasonable, and we gave ourselves one or two days extra so that nobody can have an excuse and say the deadlines were too strict.

Blanca's group was learning teamwork skills. They learned to create nuanced strategies that addressed the obstacles encountered with their original plan. These strategies incorporated abstract, real-world concepts: motivation (having "fun") and the benefits of a margin of error in the deadline.

Methodical studies can tell us much more about these processes. Prior theory and research suggest that youth's experience of high investment, trust, and reciprocity with peers are important preconditions to these learning processes (Piaget, 1965; Selman, 2003). But this needs to be tested.

Skilled practitioners know a lot about these dynamics and complexities. They have developed logic models of how these developmental processes unfold and the variety of paths these can follow. Researchers can contribute by learning from them, as well as listening to youth and close observation of how these processes unfold over time. They can help by providing methodical description of the relationships between different challenges, the processes youth go through, and their learning outcomes.

Coming to Terms with Diversity

Another critical set of developmental challenges faced by youth is one they bring in from outside. Young people today can no longer reach adulthood by just following a single mold set by prior generations. They are confronted everyday with diverse values, codes of behavior, and meaning systems. Youths' lives at home, at school and in the media present them with cross-tensions between different ways of thinking.

They face the task of coming to terms with this diversity. They must figure out the logic behind different codes, including unstated assumptions. This task is not just about the self (i.e. the well-studied problem of identity). It includes understanding others, learning how to relate to them, and developing skills to act across different worlds. To navigate adulthood (get a job, etc.), adolescents must learn to "code shift" and move between meaning systems (Larson, Wilson, Brown, Furstenberg, & Verma, 2002). They must deal with cross pressures, split loyalties, multiple selves, and conflicting value systems.

Korean American immigrant youth, for example, may be expected to be respectful and compliant to parents' authority at home. Yet other contexts (peers, school, youth programs)

may demand that they speak up, ask questions, and assert independent opinions. Such cross-pressures are frequent across immigrant youth (Gaytan, Carhill, & Suarez-Orozco, 2007).

Cross tensions can be especially difficult for youth who are marginalized due to their social class, ability, sexuality, citizenship status, race or ethnicity (Russell & Van Campen, 2011). Spencer (2006) elucidates how societal marginalization presents African American males with formidable, multi-layered developmental challenges.

These diversity challenges are relevant to all youth in contemporary pluralist societies. Several European American youth we interviewed at the Station (pseudonym) said the high value placed on tolerance in this program were “opposite” from their parents’ values. This created a challenge. For many majority youth the challenge, paradoxically, is that they don’t recognize this set of challenges (Perry, 2001). Many White youth (or their parents) deny cultural differences. They see Western values as the norm, thus contributing to the difficulties faced by non-majority youth. Our field too often does the same.

Researchers have important roles to play in helping us understand the many variations in the challenges youth face. Comprehending the breadth and depth of these challenges is crucial to helping our field support youth’s dealing with them. What form do these cross-pressures take in programs with youth from different combinations of diverse groups? How are they manifest in language, peer relations, and youth’s motivation in different activities? How do cross-pressures between home and programs play out?

Qualitative studies of effective programs suggest that youth’s experience of naming and unpacking these issues is a crucial step in addressing this task (Halverson, 2009; Watkins, Larson, & Sullivan, 2007). Having safe opportunities to examine one’s own and others’ beliefs appears to have powerful effects in helping young people discover the humanity in others and develop a more inclusive perspective (Hammack, 2006; Larson, Jensen, Kang, Griffith, Rompala, in press). We also believe that developing critical consciousness of the multiple layers of privilege and injustice is critical for all youth (Ginwright, 2010). These challenges and the developmental processes that address them need further study.

Other Developmental Challenges

These examples are just a sample of the many types of developmental challenges that youth can encounter or bring into programs. Often they involve reconciling cross-pressures, contradictions, or competing warrants. Kirshner, Pozzoboni, and Jones (2011) provide a lucid illustration of how youth conducting participatory action research were brought face-to-face with a conflict between their strong investment in a cause and the failure of their research findings to support the cause. With age, the challenges youth face increasingly involve hypotheticals – thinking through the range of possible impacts from a given action (Heath, 1999; Larson, 2011a). Researchers can contribute by embracing complexity. They can help us better understand the difficulties in the obstacles, dilemmas, and problems with which youth struggle.

The Challenges Faced by Practitioners

Programs can provide a safe space and fertile conditions for youth to work on these knotty developmental tasks. The challenges for programs and their staff include how to support the types of learning processes just discussed. Creating and sustaining these positive conditions (supportive relationships, constructive norms, meaningful activities) is by no means simple or formulaic. It involves planning and dealing with unexpected dilemmas of practice (Larson &

Walker, 2010). Beyond creating these conditions is the complex question: How do you help youth work on the difficult puzzles entailed in learning real-world skills? Let us again use our examples to discuss this question and how researchers can contribute.

Teamwork

How does program staff support youth's processes of learning to deal with the challenges of working in a team? With limited time and energy, staff can face difficult choices, for example, between working with a "slacker" to change her/his habits, helping the rest of the group work with those who don't contribute, or focusing on the completion of the team's project. If young people learn teamwork through trial and error, how much do you steer youth versus let them learn directly from outcomes (including big errors)?

Such is the complexity of youth work. No regression equation is going to answer these questions, but research can help practitioners better understand their choices, based on information collected across different programs and types of youth.

One set of challenges for staff is that peer dynamics can veer not just to "errors," but in truly problematic directions. Repeated studies show that, in worst case scenarios, unsupervised youth in programs teach each other not teamwork, but antisocial behavior (Dodge, Lansford, & Dishion, 2006). We need to help staff better spot when this is happening and how to prevent it.

An equally hard set of practitioner challenges is when, where, and exactly how to support youth's learning constructive teamwork skills. Part of staff's role is helping to create an environment in which youth experience trust, reciprocity, and other pre-conditions for this learning. Beyond this are questions about how to effectively coach youth in their learning process? If youth's task includes developing new, more abstract and multi-level concepts for dealing with difficult puzzles, can we expect young people to discover these concepts on their own? Heath's (1999) research suggests that effective staff seed the environment with new language forms that provides youth conceptual tools for strategic thinking.

Researchers can help by studying how different practices help youth learn to address teamwork challenges. They have a role in describing the different peer scenarios, when they are likely to occur, and effective strategies used by staff.

Coming to terms with diversity

How can programs and staff help youth learn to navigate a world of diversity and cross-tensions? How do you help young people learn to deal with experiences of prejudice – and examine their own assumptions and biases?

Programs can be part of the problem for youth. In our experience many adapt a post-racial, ethnically-blind ethos that rationalizes denial. In a mixed-race, faith-based program we studied, our questions about possible racial issues were dismissed with: "We are all children under God." McCready (2004) provides a vivid account of how the faculty advisor of a program for GLBTQ youth was insensitive to the unique forms of marginalization encountered by gay youth of color, leaving them confused and alienated.

A challenge is that both youth and adult staff often experience discomfort in talking about these highly charged issues. Bringing them out in the open can create intense self-consciousness. It is easy to feel judged from every direction.

At the Station, mentioned earlier, staff addressed this challenge by making it a central focus of their program culture. Youth reported that a basic credo was: "All different, all equal." A young man explained, "One of the biggest parts of the Station is that they constantly encourage people to respect people regardless of what they seem to be or what their race, religion or creed or gender orientation." As a result, he went on to say, "In the Station, you don't feel self-conscious at all, like ever!"

They have made this challenge into a program mantra. Staff modeled the principle of "all different, all equal" in their relationships with youth, in fact they did not use the word "youth" because of its connotations of inequality. This approach was absorbed by program members. As one young person said, "You kind of adapt their values and their language and their accepting other people."

Of course the program mantra itself was only the beginning. The diverse membership of the Station provided youth many opportunities to learn about both differences and equality: about different ways of life and common humanity. The central focus the program gave to these issues encouraged youth to actively engage with them: to go deeper. Youth also learned to practice what they learned. Several youth said they learned to "stand for" each other.

Halverson (2009) describes several youth theater programs that employ a distinct method to do this. Youth first gathered stories that focused on a diversity issues (e.g., being an immigrant in America), then analyzed the common narrative and crafted plays that exposed this array of narratives. These plays acted out youth's experiences of typical acts of prejudice, struggle, humorous situations, and the dignity associated with diverse identities. This method appeared to be highly effective in helping youth address the cross-pressures they experienced.

Research can contribute by describing the different approaches taken by programs and help us understand how staff is effective in addressing youth's challenges. Cooper (2011) suggests that staff often play roles as "brokers" helping youth understand different cultural codes. But there is much to be learned about how to broker the wide variety of situations staff encounter. The complexity of the issues and the different permutations they take calls for "Description, description, description!"

Another ripe issue for researchers is to help us understand the interface youth experience between the program and families. As we mentioned, several members of the Station felt the program's values were "opposite" from their parents. The program provided a refuge that was important to the youth. There are important and difficult questions to be explored about when and how staff engages with youths' families.

Conclusion: Embracing Complexity

Deep complexity is part of the human condition. Young people have always faced the challenge of learning to navigate the multiple, sometimes entangled, levels of team relationships (Hammond, 2007). To make their way to adulthood in the 21st century, they face increased challenges in understanding the enormous diversity of cultures, codes, and meaning systems that are a part of contemporary life; and they must learn to collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds. Programs can provide safe and fertile environments for youth to work on these – and many other – complex tasks associated with coming of age.

Staff members face the second order challenges of how to support youth's learning to navigate these puzzles. How do you help youth learn to work with difficult collaborators – and with their own human conceits? How do you help broker their encounters with diversity and injustice? When do you teach; when do you let youth learn from trial and error? And how do you choose priorities among the many intense demands on your attention: the many things you should and could do?

This complexity requires that all in the field of youth development – including researchers – approach their work with humility. We cannot expect to discover a simple variable or formula that, alone, provides a magic bullet that turns low quality programs into banner ones.

Researchers can contribute by helping describe, chart, and unpack the many forms of this complexity:

- What are the small and large challenges, obstacles, and problems experienced by youth and staff?
- How frequent are each encountered? When and under what condition do they occur?
- How does the array of challenges differ across types of program and youth populations?
- What strategies do youth and staff learn to deal with these varied challenges? What strategies are effective in what situations?
- How do expert practitioners differ in how they appraise challenges and the strategies they employ to address them (Cf. Walker & Larson, submitted).

Challenges, of course, can be subjective. What one person sees as a problem, another may not. There is an important role for interpretation and critical discussion in unpacking human complexity and situating it in meaningful conceptual frameworks. At the same time, there is an important role for quantitative research in examining frequencies, testing multivariate relationships, and studying pathways.

Understanding challenges, problems, obstacles, and dilemmas is a good entry point for many ends. It can help define the agenda for researchers. More importantly, as we have seen, naming the challenges is important to youth's processes of learning. Blanca and her collaborators' recognition of the varied problems in their initial plan was the key to developing more reasonable strategies that took these complexities into account. Understanding and naming the challenges is also a key to staff's support for youth's development. At the Station, the motto, "All different, all equal," places the challenges of life in a world of diversity at the center of program members' consciousness, and inspires interactions and processes that take youth (and staff) deeper.

The underlying message of this article is that it is essential for researchers to see programs from the point of view of the people in them. Researchers have learned quite a bit of what can be learned from arm's length: that programs can make a difference in youths' lives, and that certain features of settings are associated with these changes. To go further, to contribute to practice, researchers need to work side by side with practitioners—and youth—to understand their complex worlds as they experience them. They need to provide evidence that informs the decision-making of youth workers and youth organizations (Bialechki & Conn, 2011).

Bialechki and Conn (2011) describe a vision in which research is used to "infuse" youth organization with relevant evidence. This includes evidence that is "local" to the challenges

faced by a particular program, program model, or population of youth. It also includes evidence about the challenges, youth processes, and effective staff practices found across varied settings – but with recognition that local programs may need to select and adapt these findings to the complexities of their setting.

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The Future of Youth Development: Multiple Wisdoms, Alternate Pathways and Aligned Accountability

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The Future of Youth Development: Multiple Wisdoms, Alternate Pathways and Aligned Accountability

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Abstract: Based on trends and events observed or experienced by the author over the last 30 years in research, evaluation and practice, this article examines three challenges facing and shaping the future of the youth programs as contexts for development. The first challenge surrounds how the field comes to understand, value and integrate different forms of knowing -- particularly quantitative data. The second challenge represents how the field shifts from proving it makes a difference to improving the ways it makes a difference by expanding the pathways to impact. The third challenge regards how the field responds to and shapes accountability pressures in ways that better align accountability rather than succumb to it. Implications of each challenge for effectively bridging research and practice are noted.

Introduction

This is not an article about predicting the future. That's a risky business at best and not one in which I claim expertise. But just as it is important to look back over the last one hundred years of progress in understanding youth development, it is also important to look forward. What factors could, should or simply will shape the research, practice, programs, public will and policy surrounding non-formal learning and youth development programs in the future? Some of these factors will originate and be nurtured within the field while others will likely arise externally and have significant influence.

This article deliberately focuses on youth programs as contexts for development and the various ecologies that shape programs. By youth programs I am referring to intentional programs that use a non-formal, youth-centric approach to learning and development rather than youth development as a philosophy or an approach, a distinction that emerged at a conference focused on building the field of youth development and is captured in Hamilton and Hamilton (2003). This is done to shift the focus away from adolescent development in general and from the full breadth of family and community influences on youth development that are critically

important but not all programmatic in nature. The shift to youth programs as contexts for development and their ecology brings more focus to the field as a deliberate form of practice. It also enables sharper focus on such issues as the professional development of the youth workers who make programs happen and the community, organizational, system and policy ecologies in which programs operate.

In my view, a series of shifts makes this focus on programs and systems appropriate. These shifts will be briefly examined from the perspectives of my lived experience in the field for over thirty years. The article then explores three challenges the field must address as a result of these shifts and related changes in expectations. Each challenge informs both the types of research and evaluation that will be required to move forward as well as specific implications for bridging research and practice effectively. The challenges address the importance of using multiple sources of wisdom, of exploring alternative pathways to impact, and of dealing with accountability. In this way I hope to identify those forces and factors that have and likely will shape the future of our field and reflect on how we might utilize them in ways that matter for improving the quality, accessibility, and impact of youth programs – and thereby increase critical learning and developmental outcomes for youth.

Recent Shifts Affecting the Field

Within the latest thirty years major shifts in the field of youth development have often been caused by or generated new research and evaluation. My perspectives and understandings of these shifts were created or influenced by my personal experience as a leader, participant, and observer over time.

These shifts include such things as

- the growth of program evaluation as a field and profession since the 1970s in ways that advanced the systematic use of data for assessing and improving impact;
- the creation of the Society for Research on Adolescence¹ in 1984 and the creation of multiple journals and edited volumes which helped increase the quality, interdisciplinary nature and visibility of research on young people;
- the work of the William T. Grant Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship (1988) report *The Forgotten Half* that showed higher education was not reaching all youth, and helped identify the need to understand major differences among American youth's pathways to adulthood;
- the rise of strength-based approaches in the 1990s (especially the Search Institute assets model²) which helped make development as important a frame as prevention and intervention;
- the work of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development and its influential report, *A Matter of Time*, (Quinn & Takanishi, 1992) which brought attention to the importance of out of school time for learning and development;
- the creation of the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research at the Academy for Educational Development that provided leadership and a visible national hub for this work;
- the series of studies by Public/Private Ventures (e.g. Tierney & Grossman, 1995) on mentoring and other youth and community development programs that both proved the value of programmatic efforts and provided guidance on improving practice;
- the call by Karen Pittman and the Forum for Youth Investment to systematically move beyond *problem free* to *fully prepared and fully engaged*³ which emphasized the importance of the broader community and policy role in youth development;

- the work of Della Hughes, the National Network of Homeless and Runaway Youth, and the creation of the *CYD Journal*⁴ in the 1990s that, along with others, emphasized the combination of youth and community development;
- the growth of the service-learning movement and the value of civic engagement led by Kellogg Foundation investments⁵ and the National Youth Leadership Council among others, which held up youth as contributors and resources not just participants;
- the investments during the 1990s by the then Dewitt Wallace-Readers Digest Fund in the professional development of youth workers in multiple youth-serving organizations and systems that promoted systematic examination of the field and the programs and people who run them;
- the increase in other private and federal funding for youth development in the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century including the Mott Foundation and federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers in the afterschool area;
- the publication of *Youth Development: Issues, Challenges, and Directions*⁶, which gave voice to the field through essays by multiple leaders;
- the creation of a National Youth Development Clearinghouse and Research Council at the National Collaboration for Youth, which helped gather our fugitive literature and unite the researchers and evaluators inside national youth organizations;
- Richard Lerner's editorial leadership and writing over the years and the Tufts University 4-H study of positive youth development that helped to measure key concepts and explore different trajectories of development⁷;
- the emergence of multiple undergraduate and graduate programs for youth development practitioners and researchers, including the M. Ed. in Youth Development Leadership at the University of Minnesota, that helped educate a generation of leaders in the field;
- a number of foundation investments in community youth development efforts, most notably the Kellogg⁸ Foundation's *Kellogg Youth Investment Partnerships*, that worked to deeply change the community ecology for youth;
- the Michelle Gambone and James Connell work (e.g. Gambone, Klern, & Connell, 2002) on the difference supports and opportunities make, that provided a framework and evidence for community approaches;
- the release of the Eccles and Gootman *National Research Council - Institute of Medicine* report *Community Programs that Promote Youth Development* in 2002 that gave scientific credibility to youth programs in new ways and created a language and a framework for thinking about the characteristics of youth programs that were likely to make a difference;
- the Wingspread Conference (Garza, Borden, & Stone, 2004) and eventual creation of the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition that helped us see professionals in our through the lens of workforce development⁹;
- the development and resourcing of studies on youth programs as contexts for development by the W. T. Grant Foundation (1988);
- the work of Reed Larson and his colleagues looking inside youth programs as contexts for development that provided new insights into developmental processes occurring in programs with implications for practice;
- the development of multiple ways to assess quality and the work of the Weikert Center for Youth Program Quality on quality improvement approaches and systems¹⁰;

These people, organizations, ideas, and publications, in combination with many other efforts, helped changed how I have come to see the field. They helped me move from a broad but ambiguous sense of the importance of community in youth development to a more focused

effort to understand public perceptions of what youth need to succeed. They helped me move from a broad sense of the importance of informal opportunities that communities can provide to a more focused sense of how we design and deliver deliberate non-formal community learning opportunities through programs.

These influential contributions allowed me to reframe my thinking and move from a fairly narrow focus on programs where youth become engaged in their own learning and development to a larger understanding of ways to shape the people and systems that support opportunities in the community. It is not that I no longer believe in the importance of informal community and family influences on development. Rather, I have come to see youth work—with a deliberate focus on the role of non-formal community learning opportunities that are intentional contexts of development and on system approaches in communities that support them—as the best way to shape an applied field that can make a difference in the lives of youth.

These shifts have also created new expectations. Youth development has moved into what I call the “major leagues.” We’re no longer playing in the minors; our work now is commonly brought up in major conversations around education, learning, community development and health. These efforts helped earn community youth programs a seat at bigger tables with a role to play that is more necessary than simply nice. And with this shift to major league status comes increasing expectations—expectations for greater accountability for greater quality; for certification of professional practitioners and accreditation of programs; for more systematic and public policy supports for such efforts; and for increased use of data and evidence in the design and operations of youth programs.

All these expectations increase the role research and evaluation can play in our field as well as fundamentally alter how we think about bridging research and practice. How the field of youth development—with its variety of programs, multiple types of professionals, and diverse workforce of full, part-time, and voluntary practitioners—works to meet these expectations is the key to its future. The ways in which this plays out are likely to be shaped by how the field addresses three major challenges.

Three Challenges Moving Forward

Based on these reflections, my participation in some of the major forces shaping youth development over the last thirty years, and my efforts to create and lead a statewide, university-based intermediary for more than a decade, three clear challenges have emerged:

- Valuing, nurturing and integrating multiple forms of wisdom
- Exploration of alternative pathways to impact, and
- Alignment of different forms of accountability.

The ways we think about both research and practice, and the bridge between them, in the years ahead will be shaped by these fundamental challenges.

Challenge 1: Recognition and Integration of Multiple Forms of Wisdom

Wisdom comes in many forms and from multiple ways of knowing. The goal of wisdom, and in my view research and evaluation in our field, goes beyond understanding child and adolescent development. It means applying research and evaluation in practice that makes a difference in the learning and development of young people as they engage as learners, contribute as citizens, navigate their present and plan their future. In a field that has historically grown largely from practical wisdom, the future lies not in discarding such wisdom but embracing,

documenting, and integrating it with multiple other types of wisdom. We must broaden our approaches to discovery and understanding and then make the most of the data we gather to strengthen practice, stimulate new research, and impact youth policy and funding for the field.

Empirical research and program evaluations using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies have stimulated much of the progress in our field over the last 30-plus years. To its credit, much of this work has been interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary by nature and includes developmental and community psychology, sociology, education, prevention science, economics, evaluation, communications, social work, and policy research. Because empirical studies are widely accepted as the coin of the realm in the “major leagues,” we must become more adept at using quantitative data in particular to make our case and document our progress in reaching our goals.

Cultural, community and participant wisdom is also essential. Even the best forms of empirical research can have limited meaning without an understanding of different cultural and community contexts. Understanding those contexts and their implications for young people and for youth programs is critical and needs to include understanding the ways in which cultures grow and develop inside of youth programs and organizations. But to succeed, we must include the wisdom of young people themselves. As co-creators and participants in youth programs, young people have unique perspectives and valuable insights into what is happening and why. While we cannot simply defer to their wisdom, we can also not afford to ignore it if we are to grow as a field. Youth as colleagues in building our field is one of the greatest untapped resources available.

Together these multiple types of wisdom can help youth programs attract, retain, engage, and impact youth and assure the quality, accessibility, efficiency, and effectiveness of program efforts. When we see value only in one or two of these approaches to understanding and discovery, we are shortchanging the field and depriving it of needed insights and the power of integrated ways of knowing.

Implicit in this challenge for bridging research and practice is our dedication to the growth of each as well as the integration of different forms of wisdom. Internal and external opportunities that promote this robust research-practice integration include the preparation of youth workers and the education of program leaders, researchers and evaluators. Such integration depends on building theories, analogies and metaphors that connect across various audiences and represent various ways of knowing. This means moving from “framework wars” to “creative integration” where theories of learning and development for the whole child acknowledge the unique and common features of non-formal learning approaches and reinforce programs as valuable contexts for development. This includes theories that help us to make sense of what is known as well as to rethink our approaches to both practice and research.

An example of a useful metaphor that I have written about is one framed around developmental diet and exercise (Blyth, 2006). That framework looks at cumulative rather than single intervention approaches and is more consistent with what we know about development. It helps community leaders think about the accumulation of experiences, not just the impact of one program. It helps people better understand the complexity of development and what it takes to make a real difference. It can change the way we design research and the types of questions we ask.

In reinforcing research–practice integration, our field needs to find ways for preparing practitioners to value, recognize, collect and utilize data in their practice in ways that are just beginning to appear¹¹. Youth programs will not thrive in the major leagues if they do not track data better and analyze it more usefully. New data management systems available for organizations (such as 4-H OnLine¹²) and used in major cities (such as YouthNet¹³ in Providence) now allow very innovative ways to track participation and survey youth.

It is of growing importance to prepare and support “bilingual bridgers” or “translators” who can move across systems and help integrate different forms of wisdom. They work to bring out commonalities that connect different forms of wisdom into practice and lead multiple forms of practice to inform new questions for research. One way for these bridgers to reinforce research–practice integration is to shape the publications and reading that is encouraged in the field. People in the field benefit from exposure to a range of journals and other publications, but there is a special need for those that integrate different forms of wisdom and are accessible to the wide range of professionals in youth work. Publications that are peer reviewed but not constricted by overly narrow distinctions between scholarly and applied research or between critical reflection, practice and evaluation will be especially important.

In summary, our efforts to address this challenge will require us to find a better balance in how we come to understand and use what will make a difference. It will require placing more value on quantitative data and the valid and reliable measurement of core concepts while not decreasing the value and richness of qualitative data and the learning that comes from practice. We must not surrender to a simple bookkeeping approach to youth work but also recognize the value of data that captures outcomes, assesses quality, measures engagement, and is useful in policy as well as program improvement circles.

Challenge 2: Exploration of Alternative Pathways to Impact

Over several years as I have spoken to various groups, I have come to frame the future of youth programs and their ability to make a difference for young people in primarily two ways that aim to unite around a focus on increasing impact but avoid overly simplistic answers to which people often leap.

The first way talks about moving from the additive model of the past to a multiplicative model for the future. In the past we primarily thought about increasing the impact of youth programs by adding more programs. While there is often a demonstrated need for more programs especially in opportunity-depleted communities or to deal with inequities in access within a community, research suggests it is no longer sufficient to think in these simple additive terms.

Instead, the evidence suggests that it is time to move to a more multiplicative model of impact—a model that recognizes and brings into one equation the various factors that research shows contribute to a program’s impact. The equation I have come to use to represent this is

$$\mathbf{RI} = \mathbf{PD} \times \mathbf{A} \times \mathbf{QP} \times \mathbf{YE}$$

Where

RI represents the ***Real Impact*** experienced by a youth in a program

PD represents ***Program Design*** features that enhance the potential for impact

A represents a youth’s ***Access*** to and participation in the program

QP represents the ***Quality of Practice*** as actually delivered in the program

YE represents the individual ***Youth’s Engagement*** in the program

In this model, the impact of a program on a given young person is a dynamic function of how the program is designed, whether and to what extent they can access it and participate, the quality practiced at the point of service, and the level of cognitive and socio-emotional engagement the young person experiences. To be clear, this equation only assesses the impact of a program, not the impact of communities, families and other factors present in the youth's life. While our field is not yet ready for a more comprehensive mathematics of development, this formula for seeing program impact in terms of a multiplicative model has utility for expanding the ways we think about impact.

These factors are interactive. For example, the program's design may increase participation and engagement while the quality of practice may increase the level of a youth's engagement. Absence of any factor means multiplication by zero and thus no impact. Youth who cannot access a program cannot be positively impacted by it. Programs that have no structure or design features that matter are unlikely to have impact. Poor quality can not only eliminate positive impact but actually have negative impacts.

The equation reminds us that some of the factors affecting impact are characteristics of the program and the quality practices within it, others are a function of factors affecting access to the program, and others are unique for each youth. This richer but more complex model illustrates that we can shift the "math" from simply adding more programs to working on the various factors that can improve the impact of programs. It also begins to delineate possible alternative pathways through which to improve impact as will be noted later.

The second way I frame the conversation about the future of our field emphasizes the need to shift from *proving* impact to *improving* impact. The latter requires us to explore alternative pathways for impact. Currently too much pressure is placed on programs to either (1) prove they deliver specific outcomes, especially outcomes too narrowly defined or not fully appropriate for youth programs, or (2) prove they have a positive economic return on investment. The first point illustrates the push to assess the value and contributions of youth programs using only formal educational outcomes such as grades and test scores; whereas, the second point illustrates the push to attribute cost values to bad outcomes such as delinquency while under valuing youth engagement and their contributions to community.

As noted in Blyth and LaCroix-Dalluhn (in press) such pressures too often distort what happens in research (what we study) and practice (what we do in youth programs). Such distortion, in my view, inhibits our search for ways to improve impact. To be clear, I do believe as a field we need to measure outcomes and to assess costs and benefits—and we would be wise to do so even more systematically and less haphazardly in the years to come. However, these are not the only pathways to improving impact that our field needs to explore.

Only implementing proven practices, which is very hard to do with the fidelity needed to ensure impact, is both expensive and uneven in its success – especially in an unregulated and under-resourced field such as youth development. Only funding programs with a proven economic return on investment requires years of work to understand the economic tradeoffs before one can make wise decisions about how to invest public resources. Both of those investments are needed in youth development programs but both are years away, hence the need to explore and exploit alternative pathways.

Certainly the exploration and implementation of alternative pathways will require serious research studies that get at outcomes. Such studies will be needed and are critical to clarifying

these pathways and their promise. Research that more systematically looks at what factors make a difference in programs that produce good outcomes and the extent to which various professional development efforts or systems support real changes in practice will prove very valuable to the field. In a sense, this approach moves our field from being stuck in a defensive posture of trying to prove that what we do can make a difference to improving the way we do it and increasing the probability of positive outcomes.

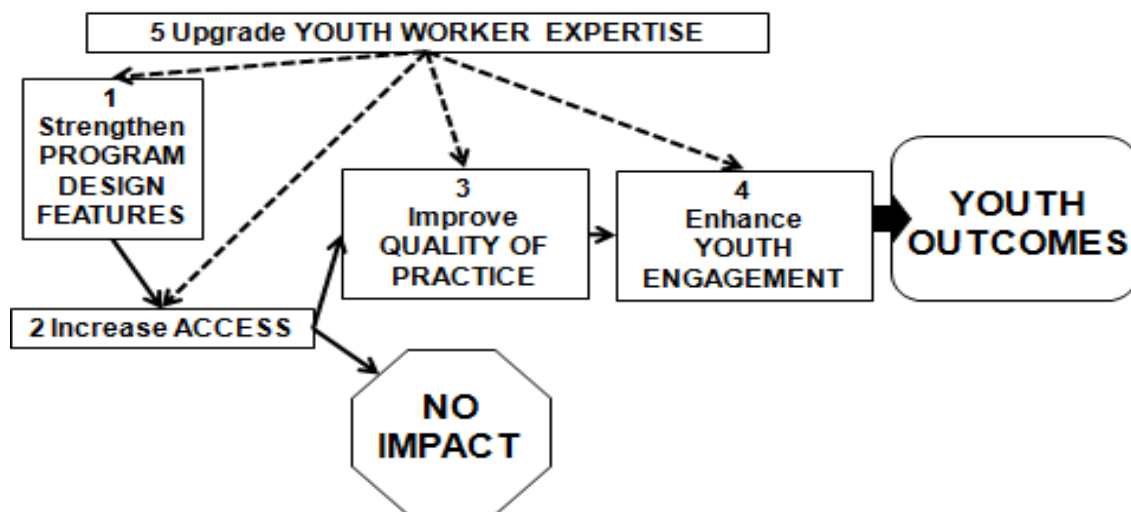
One reason for this shift is my belief that our field is already, and likely to stay, under-resourced in evaluation and research funds. Too often the expectations for outcome evidence is radically out of line with the resources needed to prove impact or economic benefits. Thus, asking each program to continually prove their outcomes for youth is both an unreachable and inefficient approach.

Another reason is that over the last 20 years, and especially in the last 10, the evidence that high quality youth programs of various types *can* impact youth outcomes is quite clear across a broad array of academic, cognitive, prevention, and socio-emotional outcomes (e.g. Durlack & Weissberg, 2007; Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008; Vandell, Reisner, & Pierce, 2007). Proving outcomes are possible is no longer the appropriate main driver for research and evaluation about youth programs. More critical in my view are studies that begin to understand the relationship between the factors in the Real Impact equation above and how they play out in practice.

Using the equation above and thinking in terms of factors that have a probability of increasing impact allows us to think of five alternative pathways for improving impact as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

5 PATHWAYS TO INCREASING IMPACT OF YOUTH PROGRAMS



The model assumes the equation factors interact but have no independent direct effects (e.g., even the best designed program if youth cannot access it, it lacks quality or does not engage youth has little impact). Each alternate pathway is numbered in the diagram.

The first strategy or pathway is to improve the design of youth programs so they have more of the features that research and practical wisdom suggest have impact. These are the types of features highlighted in the Eccles and Gootman report (2002). For another example see Durlack and Weissberg's (2007) SAFE model. This pathway involves bridging research and program design in new ways and with better empirical understanding of "best", proven, and promising practices. This pathway is commonly in the hands of program developers who select the strategies and activities that make up a given program

The second pathway involves changing the accessibility of the program and the level of a youth's participation in the program. While participation could appropriately be thought of as yet another factor made up of frequency, duration and intensity, I have chosen to include it in access since the same issues affecting access often affect participation (e.g., transportation, affordability, and availability). In a recent article (Blyth & LaCroix-Dalluhn, in press) my co-author and I argue that the inequalities in access to non-formal and informal community learning opportunities are likely greater than in formal learning opportunities through school and a significant factor contributing to educational disparities. As such inequalities beyond the classroom represent an important opportunity gap that must be closed. If we want to improve the impact of non-formal learning opportunities on youth in any number of areas, we must reduce these inequities and promote equal access and opportunities to participate at levels high enough to make a difference. This pathway builds on and needs additional research about what types of impacts community and system change efforts, such as those by the intermediaries that are part of the Collaborative for Building Afterschool Systems (CBASS)¹⁴, have on access and participation. For recent excellent example of such a study see Kauh (2011).

The third pathway requires improving the quality of practice at the point of service or as actually implemented. This pathway relies on the growing literature on the importance of quality and its increasing measurability and malleability (Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2009). Note that the first pathway depends on incorporating sound research-based design features into the program plan. This third pathway relies on fidelity of implementation of those features of practice that research has shown strongly connect quality measures to actual program outcomes. Here the key players for practice are the middle managers and front-line staff that shape what happens at the "point of service" where youth experience the program. To more effectively exploit this pathway we likely need more efficient and effective use of quality measures that become more fully integrated into the routine assessment and monitoring of programs. Minnesota 4-H has launched just such an effort using both adult and youth volunteers to rate quality. The early evidence from this work indicates that quality observation and assessment approaches are motivating to many practitioners, unlike typical outcome studies, because they provide guidance on how to improve their practices not just judge them by a limited set of results (Moore, Grant, McLaughlin, Walker, & Shafer, 2010). Research is needed in this area that more strongly links elements of quality to various forms of outcomes.

The fourth pathway relies on better understanding and promoting youth's engagement in programs. This is heavily influenced by and built into some of the higher level definitions of quality such as the Weikert Center's Youth Program Quality Assessment¹⁵. It is, however, distinct for our purposes here as it is a characteristic of an individual youth, not the observable "general" practice going on in the program. Here new frameworks for thinking about youth

engagement (Sullivan, 2011) begin to pull apart participation from connection, voice, and collective action. This pathway is one that will likely require greater intentionality from multiple players. One of the most intriguing is the possibility of using levels of youth engagement in youth programs as a major outcome variable for both programmatic and policy purposes. This area, along with the assessment of youth contributions, holds great promise for future research as well as system change efforts.

The final alternative pathway requires upgrading the expertise of youth workers. This pathway can have impact on multiple other pathways as indicated in Figure 1. It assumes that we are able to help youth workers at various levels and in various programs become more intentional in appropriate ways and use data effectively to make changes that will improve impact. The support of these types of changes is likely to involve some combination of increasing core competencies in youth workers as well as increasing their expertise in seeing situations differently, diagnosing what is happening, and implementing different approaches in real time (Walker & Walker, in press). Research and evaluation in this area are badly needed.

The role of the different types of wisdom and the different types of empirical research and evaluation needed to move the field along these multiple alternative pathways is complex and challenging; some of it is already underway, but much more is needed. Which pathways get the most attention and how they use strong empirical research are likely to evolve over time. One of the major factors affecting that evolution is how we respond to the third challenge—the alignment of accountability practices.

Challenge 3: Alignment of Different Kinds of Accountability

With the expansion of the number of pathways for improving impact comes the need for better aligning different types of accountability across various levels of policy, program, and practice. Our current accountability systems seem to be driven primarily by evidence of program level outcomes. This leads government and some private funders to insist upon supporting only “evidence-based” programs with a sufficient level of rigor in research and evaluation to “prove” the program produces a set of known outcomes. Depending on the availability of research resources for such studies and the appropriateness of randomized control experimental designs, it is very hard to produce such evidence. More importantly, it is very hard to effectively bridge it into practice in a field with highly variable types of programs and wide diversity in how they are implemented across sites. Without high fidelity to the model, these models provide little improvement in outcomes.

One could argue that this type of accountability is unlikely to be successful in a field such as youth development where there is a relatively low level of public investment and regulation, high variability in program designs and quality of practice, a varied paid and volunteer workforce with few credentials or certified competencies, with the youth in the program voluntarily and themselves dynamic factors in the program’s effectiveness. Such conditions certainly complicate effectively improving impact but more important for the argument here is that they restrict themselves to only one or two forms of accountability even though they are unlikely to be successful.

I have come to believe, both in our field and for the broader efforts at producing desired outcomes for children and youth, that a new paradigm for aligning rather than selecting a narrow form of accountability is needed. Table 1 below illustrates how different forms of accountability might be aligned to improve the probability that what is done in our field has increased impact.

Table 1
Sample Way of Aligning Accountability

Accountability for ...	Level Responsible
Selecting Outcomes	<i>Policy Level</i>
Monitoring Outcomes	<i>Geographic Levels</i>
Effective Strategies	<i>System Level</i>
Improving Access	<i>System Level</i>
Quality of Program	<i>Organization Level</i>
Quality of Professional	<i>Association Level</i>

In the example, if the policy level was held accountable for establishing a clear set of desired outcomes that are needed for success in learning and development at different ages and in different areas, then other levels could be accountable in different ways. In part this is the logic behind efforts to change the odds that youth are “ready by 21 - ready for work, college and life” as the Forum for Youth Investment and its partners propose¹⁶. It is also the logic behind the Strive Foundation’s efforts in collective impact (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

If a clear set of outcomes existed and was regularly assessed in a community then other forms of accountability could be aligned to improve them. That could include holding geographic units such as cities or counties accountable for appropriately monitoring whether or not the outcomes improve, and adjusting strategies if they do not. It could include holding systems accountable for selecting and resourcing appropriate evidence-informed strategies and assuring youth have access to them. It could include asking the organizations involved in providing the programs to be accountable for the quality of the practice in their programs. Finally, it could include asking professional associations and organizations to be accountable for the competence and expertise of their practitioners.

In many ways this type of aligned accountability is what occurs in some more mature fields where more public resources are invested such that higher levels of accountability are expected. This might be seen as true for social work and early childhood care and education efforts to some degree. They are also seen in good business practices that hold some staff accountability for specific areas of work (quality, sales, etc.).

Currently we have an interesting opportunity for youth development to build a field where the alignment of accountabilities and the main pathways for improving impact work together in imaginative and effective ways. Such an effort will require the application of a rich array of empirical research and evaluation. Assuring that such research and evaluation is done, done

well, and integrates and respects other forms of knowing may be the ultimate challenges for our field moving forward.

Conclusion

In summary, the field of youth development has experienced a series of significant shifts that bring it into the major leagues at a unique time of increased accountability; decreased public resources; mixed funding models of public, private, and personal/family resources; major changes in technology; and new forms of research and analysis. By focusing on youth programs as contexts for development and the community, organizational, system, and policy ecologies in which programs exist, these factors can allow the youth work field to “come of age” in new ways. Ways that are perhaps different than fields that matured much earlier in times that preferred government regulations, had expanding public resources, or more limited views of what health and education mean.

Whether we as a field can take advantage of this unique combination of factors or succumb to narrow pressures is in part for us to determine through the ways we do research and proactively bridge research and practice. Whether around program designs, studying systems in communities, or shaping the quality of practice and the preparation of practitioners, the role of research and practice integration—deliberate bridging—is the key to our field’s future. The way we bring these various forces together to create a coherent field made up of many allied professionals, multiple organizational and community systems, and a workforce that can deliver on the promise of youth programs is critical. The role of researchers, practitioners, and most especially the “bilingual bridgers” who move between these and the world of policy and organizational leadership is particularly important if our field is to thrive going forward. The three challenges delineated here, and their implications, can positively influence and stimulate the ways we respond. If our field can become guided by wisdom that comes from knowledge in many forms, that thinks about multiple pathways to improvement, and that seeks to align rather than select a single form of accountability; our field will be stronger and the impact of opportunities for young people greater. I am excited by our challenging present and optimistic for the future of youth development as the bridging of research, practice, programs, policy and public understanding seek to rise to the occasion over the next 100 years.

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Footnotes

¹ The society emerged out of a need for more opportunities to present and discuss the increasing volume of research on adolescent development and a series of Arizona meetings focused on applied research on adolescents. See <http://www.s-r-a.org/> for information on the society and its biennial meeting.

² The work by Peter Benson and others at Search Institute to name and measure the assets young people need for positive development helped change both how we think about young people and how communities responded. Almost two million youth have completed its *Attitudes and Behavior Survey* around the world. See the series of three articles in *Applied Developmental Science* for research related to this work -- Scales et al. (2000), Leffert et al (1998), and Benson et al (1998).

³ Karen Pittman and her colleagues' work over the years at the Academy for Educational Development, the federal government, the International Youth Foundation and the Forum for Youth Investment has been fundamental to the shift. See Pittman, K. Irby, M. and Ferber, T. (1998) and other related publications available at <http://www.forumfyi.org/files/UnfinishedBusiness.pdf>

⁴ See <http://www.cydjournal.org/archives/index.html> for archives of this now defunct journal.

- ⁵ The \$13M W.K. Kellogg Foundation's "Learning in Deed" National Service Learning Initiative provides one of several examples noted here where a foundation's investment lead to major changes. See the report *Retrospective Evaluation of K-12 Service-Learning projects, 1990-2000* available at <http://www.wkkf.org/news/Articles/2002/10/Retrospective-Evaluation-Of-K-12-Service-Learning-Projects-1990-2000.aspx>. For more on the National Youth Leadership Council see <http://www.nylc.org/about>
- ⁶ The edited volume (2000) *Youth Development: Issues, Challenges and Directions* provides a series of essays by leading figures in the field and helped unite efforts and clarify language in some areas.
- ⁷ Richard Lerner has been a leading force in publishing in the field of youth development from creating journals to writing major books and studies. For an example see publications of the *Institute for Applied Youth Development* and the 4-H Study at <http://ase.tufts.edu/iaryd/researchPositive4H.htm>
- ⁸ For more on this longer term effort to make three communities the best places on earth for youth to grow up see Kellogg Youth Initiative Partnerships (KYIP): Framework for the Future available at <http://www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2001/12/Kellogg-Youth-Initiative-Partnerships-KYIP-Framework-For-The-Future.aspx>
- ⁹ For information on the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition go to <http://www.nextgencoalition.org/>
- ¹⁰ See <http://cypq.org/> for information about the Weikert Center for Youth Program Quality and its many publications and resources.
- ¹¹ For information on the National Institute on Out of School Time's Afterschool Matters Initiative and the Practitioner Fellowship see <http://www.niost.org/afterschool-matters-initiative>
- ¹² For an example of emerging technology being used in some states by the 4-h program see <https://www.4honline.com>
- ¹³ For information on an example of citywide data systems see <https://www.youthservices.net/products.asp>
- ¹⁴ See <http://www.afterschoolsystems.org/> for information about and publications of the Collaborative for Building Afterschool Systems.
- ¹⁵ For information on this assessment tool go to http://cypq.org/products_and_services/assessment_tools
- ¹⁶ For information on the Ready by 21 Initiative and partnership see <http://www.forumfyi.org/readyby21>



JOURNAL OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Bridging Research and Practice



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Authors are asked to follow the guidelines below to ensure their submissions will be accepted for review:

A. Manuscripts for Feature Articles should be approximately 2,000-5,000 words. These articles are informational, explanatory, or critical analysis and interpretation of major trends or comprehensive reviews. Articles have clear implications for youth development practice and programming and are grounded in original research or are based on cutting-edge research. Feature articles selected for publication generally will answer the following questions:

- Is the information based on current research and/or an explicit theory of change?
- In the case of original research articles did the author explicitly state methodology, analysis, results and specific implications for practice?
- What are the implications for youth development research, practice, and/or programs?

B. Manuscripts for Program Articles should be approximately 1,500-4,000 words, although longer articles are accepted when appropriate. A program article is an article describing a unique, successful, or promising youth development program. Program articles chosen for publication will generally answer the following questions:

- What are the purposes, activities, and audience for the program?
- What made the program a success (or why does it promise to be a successful program)? What are the impacts?
- After reading the article, how can youth development professionals emulate it or seek funding and other resources to implement it?

C. Articles for Research and Evaluation Strategies should be approximately 1,500 to 4,500 words, although longer articles are accepted when appropriate. They describe innovative methodologies and strategies in the collection and analysis of quantitative or qualitative research and evaluation data.

D. Resource Reviews articles should be approximately 300 to 800 words in length. Contributions to the Resource Reviews provide a critical analysis of books, videos, curricula, and other tools that may be helpful to youth development professionals. The value and limitations of the resources should be noted. Readers should gain a clear idea of how this resource may be used by a youth development practitioner. The materials under review must be thoroughly identified, including author, publisher, date of publication, and information on how to obtain a copy of the materials.

Deadlines

The Journal of Youth Development is published four times per year featuring a Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall issue. Manuscripts are accepted at any time. Please allow approximately six months for completion of the review. For consideration for the

- Spring Issue submit by June 15,
- Summer Issue submit by September 15,
- Fall Issue submit by December 15, and
- Winter Issue submit by March 15.

Below are guidelines for submitting any type of article:

- Manuscripts should be in block style (no indent or tabs). Information in columns must be put in a table format.
- American Psychological Association (APA) is the required style.
- The ***Journal of Youth Development ~ Bridging Research and Practice*** is published on the World Wide Web. This means that special attention should be paid to formatting for on-screen reading. Include shorter paragraphs (e.g., 100 words), bulleted and numbered lists, and subheadings.
- Authors should include a cover page that lists the title of the article, author's name, official title and affiliation, office contact information (address, phone, and FAX numbers, electronic-mail addresses), and the date of submission.
- Authors should submit a separate Bio page highlighting professional title, affiliation, educational background and expertise.
- Authors should submit with the manuscript a brief abstract (not to exceed 150 words) and suggested key words for use in indexing. Please indicate the type of manuscript submitted, such as feature article, program article, etc.
- Submitted manuscripts should contain only non-previously published material and should not be under consideration by other publications, unless the editor grants special permission.
- It is the author's responsibility to obtain any necessary written permission for use of copyrighted material contained within the article.
- Authors are responsible for the accuracy of all citations, references, and bibliographies.
- Authors must fill out the *Journal of Youth Development* Copyright Agreement, and return it along with the manuscript.
- Authors are responsible for specifying approval by an institutional ethics committee for research involving human subjects, if applicable.

How to Send Manuscripts:

- Authors should submit their manuscripts electronically as an attachment to an e-mail. Word or hypertext markup language (HTML) are accepted.
- Manuscripts should be sent to the editor:
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